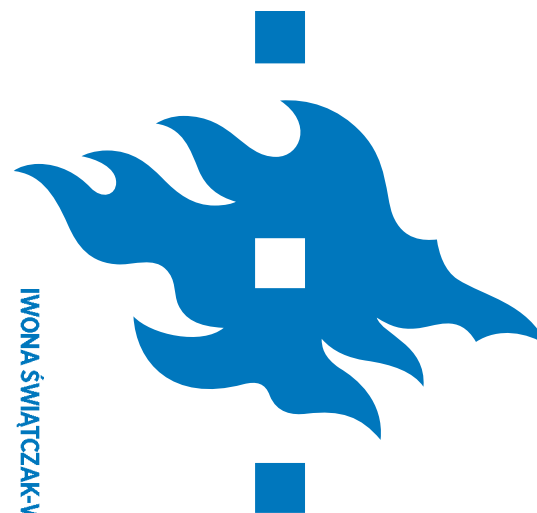


IWONA ŚWIĄTCZAK-WASILEWSKA

“THE TOUGHEST SEASON IN THE WHITE HOUSE”: THE RHETORICAL
PRESIDENCY AND THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS, 1953-1992



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Iwona Świątczak-Wasilewska

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“Nothing happens unless first a dream...”

— Carl Sandberg

ABSTRACT

The present study explores the intersection of the institutional and the Rhetorical Presidency. By recognizing that the American presidency is an institution—an embodiment of the government—a researcher looks closely not only at the President as an individual, but also at the aggregate of people who co-create the institution. The Rhetorical Presidency marks the major transformation in the pattern of communication and governance of the US Presidents in the twentieth century. In consequence of that transformation, presidential speeches have, allegedly, routinized and the White House started to rely increasingly on professional wordsmiths, rather than policy experts for speechwriting. In addition, audible and visible aspects of presidential performance became more and more important.

By reawakening attention to the State of the Union Address (SOU)—the only constitutionally mandated communication between the President and Congress that was instrumental in the development of the President’s legislative leadership—the present study seeks to explore whether and in what way the changes associated with the emergence of the Rhetorical Presidency may have affected, what Charles J. G. Griffin called, “the speech writing infrastructure”—that is the people and procedures which were responsible for coordinating the State of the Union preparatory process under presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush.

Based on the analysis of archival materials pertaining to the processes of producing the SOU during the above-mentioned presidencies, the present study challenges some generalizations attributed to the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency. By analyzing the involvement of policy experts, speechwriters,

ABSTRACT

and the selected Presidents in the SOTU process, the present study throws light on the actual impact of the transformation in the pattern of communication on drafting and the presentation of the State of the Union Addresses. As most speeches nowadays are believed to be written as instant White House responses to issues and handed to the President on the way to the podium, the SOTU process requires deliberation of the entire government. In spite of the increasing specialization of the staff's functions, the President's success or failure is also shaped by his own efforts. In fact, the Presidents have become involved in activities that go beyond the scope of their formal constitutional powers and started to play an increasingly active role in all stages of the SOTU preparatory process, including drafting, an activity which with the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency is assumed to have become a domain of professional language experts or wordsmiths. A slight reversal in the overall trend was observed in the organization of the speechwriting infrastructure in the Bush White House.

Also, in consequence of the shift to popular leadership, a further shift—*beyond words*—and towards *visual leadership*—took place. Modern leadership requires more than *mere* actions and words. Modern SOTUs are designed to be heard, not read. Importantly, as LBJ's case illustrates, visual leadership remains complementary, yet inseparable, to legislative leadership.

By emphasizing the rhetorical dimension of the office, the Rhetorical Presidency imposes demands on the presidency that contribute to making the SOTU preparatory process so time-consuming and convoluted—the toughest season in the White House.

KEYWORDS: State of the Union, rhetorical presidency, institutional presidency, speechwriting, speechmaking.

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Warsaw, Spring 2014

INTRODUCTION

Charles A. Beard once described the State of the Union Message as “the one great public document of the United States which is widely read and discussed.”¹ It was, however, long after Professor Beard’s observation and long before I came across it, that the State of the Union Address attracted my attention. The inspiration for my interest in the State of the Union Address was an article in the *International Herald Tribune* titled “What linguistic state is the union in?” written in 2002 by William Safire, a former speechwriter to President Nixon. In that article, Safire compared the linguistic expressions used by several US Presidents to describe the state of the nation. The topic of the State of the Union turned out to be interesting enough to keep me engaged in further research for several years.

Despite the fact that presidential speeches remain important means of presidential communication that can help better understand the rhetorical dimensions of the office, there is very little research in the processes that lead to the presentation of presidential speeches, particularly the State of the Union Addresses (hereafter SOTU).² This work attempts to fill that gap by reconstructing the processes and routines by which SOTUs were prepared

1. Charles A. Beard, *American Government and Politics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914), 199.

2. See for instance: C. Edwin Vilade, *President’s Speech: The Stories Behind the Most Memorable Presidential Addresses* (Guildford: Lyons Press, 2012). Charles J. G. Griffin, “Dwight D. Eisenhower: The 1954 State of the Union Address as a Case Study in Presidential Speechwriting,” in *Presidential Speechwriting: from the New Deal to the Reagan revolution and beyond*, ed. Kurt Ritter and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003). Halford R. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Rhetorical Presidency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988).

INTRODUCTION

and presented under Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush.

The period under investigation in the present work—1953 to 1992—and the coinciding presidencies of Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush, but not including Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan provide a symbolic time frame for this study. The choice of the Eisenhower presidency as the starting point is justified because it marks the beginning of the legislative presidency and since then the President is expected to present his legislative agenda in the SOTU.³ The purpose of the present study was to examine the State of the Union speechwriting infrastructure and the process of preparing the President for the presentation of the Address that was integral in the extension of the President's legislative role over a period of approximately half a century. To make this study affordable and manageable, sampling was necessary. I decided to focus on the Presidents who, with the exception of President Kennedy, were visually less powerful and for whom the rhetorical dimension of the office was, apparently, not a high priority. The reason for such a selection of the Presidents was to see, if perhaps, their attitude to rhetoric changed when they produced their fundamental policy statement and the most visible of presidential communications, which is most likely to be heard by the US citizens and the world. The Nixon presidency is not included in the study because the Nixon papers were tied up in litigation and unavailable at the time when I was conducting research in presidential papers in the United States. As no funding was available to conduct research in the Jimmy Carter papers, the choice of a democratic President fell on John F. Kennedy, only to make a surprising discovery about the attitude to rhetoric of the man to whom eloquence came so naturally. As Presidents Ronald Reagan and Bill

3. President Eisenhower followed President Truman's practice of using the SOTU to present his legislative priorities. Eisenhower also created an office of legislative affairs in the White House. For more information see Stephen J. Wayne's paper prepared for delivery at a Conference, "Eisenhower and Congress: Lessons for the 21st Century" held At the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, American University, February 19, 2010. Stephen J. Wayne, "The Eisenhower Administration: Bridge to the Institutionalized Legislative Presidency." Retrieved on July 20, 2014 from <https://www.american.edu/spa/ccps/upload/Wayne-Paper.pdf>.

Clinton are considered the unquestionable masters of communication, they were not included in the present study.

Most of the period selected for analysis is marked with a peculiar practice of the so-called “lame-duck” State of the Union. Presidents from 1953 to 1981, or from Harry Truman to Jimmy Carter, with the exception of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, followed the suggestion President Franklin Delano Roosevelt offered in his 1937 State of the Union Address. In 1937 Congress met for the first time since the passage of the Twentieth Amendment, which advanced the first session of a newly elected Congress from March 4 to January 3, and the Inaugural of a newly elected Congress from March 3 to January 20. President Roosevelt addressing the joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives, stated:

For the first time in our national history a President delivers his annual message to a new Congress within a fortnight of the expiration of his term of office. While there is no change in the Presidency this year, change will occur in future years. It is my belief that under this new constitutional practice the President should in every fourth year, insofar as seems reasonable, review the existing state of our national affairs and outline broad future problems, leaving specific recommendations for future legislation to be made by the President about to be inaugurated.⁴

Thus in the years when there was a change in the Administration (1953, 1961, 1969, 1977 and 1981), Congress received two State of the Unions, one by the outgoing President and the other by the incoming one. President George H. W. Bush’s Addresses are illustrative of a slightly different pattern. President Bush chose not to deliver the traditional SOTU at the outset of his presidency in 1989, but rather the so-called “Administration Goals” message. Nor did he deliver his “farewell” SOTU in 1993.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Presidents fulfilled their constitutional obligation of informing Congress on the condition of the state

4. Franklin D. Roosevelt: “Annual Message to Congress,” January 6, 1937. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, retrieved on September 6, 2008 from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15336>.

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by annually submitting before Congress the written message; often a cut and paste rundown of departmental reports. But when President Woodrow Wilson assumed the office, he changed the dynamics of communicating with the Congress and personally delivered the Address. Wilson's method transformed the Presidency into a vehicle for legislative leadership. His reinterpretation of the doctrines of governance triggered changes in political communication that scholars refer to as the Rhetorical Presidency. In consequence of these changes, Jeffrey Tulis argues, presidential speeches have routinized and the White House started to rely increasingly on professional wordsmiths rather than policy experts for speechwriting. In addition, audible and visible aspects of presidential performance became more and more important.⁵

Not all of Wilson's successors, however, would share the vision of the presidency as the one in which the "bully pulpit" plays the central role, or would they have the ability to affect change and move the people by delivering speeches.⁶ Except JFK, the Presidents examined in the present work are considered second tier speakers with little personal charisma to generate excitement or to move an audience.⁷

By reawakening attention to the historical origins and contemporary prac-

5. Jeffrey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

6. A "bully pulpit" is the term introduced by Teddy Roosevelt and refers to his view of the presidency as the office that "provides its occupants with an outstanding opportunity to speak out on any issue." Retrieved on August 6, 2014 from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/tr-know/>.

7. Gerald Ford "was no orator. He was a speaker or, perhaps more accurately, a talker." Eisenhower was "[n]either stylistically eloquent nor particularly distinguished in delivery." For more information on Ford and Eisenhower, see: Halford R. Ryan ed., *U. S. Presidents as Orators: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995). In the opinion of Craig R. Smith, one of George Bush's speechwriters: "The main problem with Bush's presidential rhetoric was Bush himself. George H. W. Bush did not like rehearsals, neglected style, and "often mangled syntax." See: Allan Metcalf, *Presidential Voices: Speaking Styles from George Washington to George W. Bush* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004). Lyndon Johnson, as David Zarefsky pointed out, is seldom listed as "one of America's greatest political orators. . . . [i]n public he was wooden, stilted, artificial, so much portraying the model of rectitude that he seemed afraid of his own extemporaneous expression. He disdained oratory . . ." See: "Lyndon B. Johnson," in *American Orators of the Twentieth Century: Critical Studies and Sources*, ed. Bernard K. Duffy and Halford R. Ryan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 223.

tice of the State of the Union (SOTU), the present study seeks to explore whether and in what way the changes associated with the emergence of the Rhetorical Presidency may have affected, what Charles J. G. Griffin called “the speech writing infrastructure”—that is the people and procedures, which were responsible for coordinating the State of the Union preparatory process under Presidents: Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford and Bush.⁸ By focusing on the speechwriting infrastructure of the SOTU, the present study also addresses such enduring issues in presidential speechwriting as: constraints that attend the speechwriting process, relationship of speechwriters to policy formation, access to the President and relation of speechmaking to leadership.⁹

The people on whom this study focuses constitute the core advisory resources, including the Domestic Policy Council, the Council of Economic Advisers, the White House Counsels, and key presidential speechwriters. The role of informal resources such as academics, intellectuals is addressed in passing. Generically, the SOTU is an example of policy rhetoric. By focusing on the role of the selected individuals, I attempt to establish how policy rhetoric is produced, who generates it, who contributes to it; how well the individuals involved in the process of producing the speech were linked to the White House policy processes and the formal governmental resources that contribute to the speech; how much policy expertise comes into play in the speechwriting process versus how much wordsmithing. The integration of wordsmiths in the process of composing policy rhetoric may have important implications for governance and presidential leadership.

In an effort to examine the impact of the transformation in the pattern of communication on the delivery of the SOTU, the present study addresses such questions as to how the allegedly increased stress on audible and visible

8. Charles J. G. Griffin, “Dwight D. Eisenhower: The 1954 State of the Union Address as a Case Study in Presidential Speechwriting,” in *Presidential Speechwriting: from the New Deal to the Reagan revolution and beyond*, ed. Kurt Ritter and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 68.

9. Martin J. Medhurst, “Enduring Issues in Presidential Speechwriting,” in *Presidential Speechwriting: from the New Deal to the Reagan revolution and beyond*, ed. Kurt Ritter and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 217–20.

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aspects of presidential performance may have affected the preparation of the President for the personal presentation; how the President's audience, including the Congress and the people, may have been affected by that shift to the personal delivery; how, in the final analysis, the shift affected presidential leadership.

Based on the analysis of archival materials pertaining to the processes of producing the SOTU in the Administrations of Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush, the present study challenges some generalizations attributed to the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency and throws light on the actual impact of the Rhetorical Presidency on the preparatory process of the SOTU, including presidential speechwriting and the presentation of the State of the Union in the selected Presidencies. A close look at the speechwriting processes reveals that the SOTU was not necessarily affected in the way the Rhetorical Presidency is believed to have affected presidential speechwriting. But by emphasizing the rhetorical dimension of the office, the Rhetorical Presidency imposes demands on the presidency which contribute to making the SOTU preparatory process so time-consuming and convoluted—the toughest season in the White House.

THE STATE OF THE UNION AS A RHETORICAL GENRE

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson define the State of the Union as “a uniquely presidential genre of discourse.”¹⁰ The SOTU is unique because is the only rhetoric required by the US Constitution and the Constitution charges specifically the President with the duty to update Congress on the condition of the state. Generically, Campbell and Jamieson view the State of the Union Address as characterized by the following processes: “(1) public mediations on values, (2) assessments of information and issues, and (3) policy recommendations; and each incorporates, to varying degrees, specific

10. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words. Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52.

characteristics related to each of these processes. In the course of mediating, assessing, and recommending, presidents also create and celebrate a national identity, tie together the past, present, and future, and sustain the institution of the presidency.”¹¹ The *SOTUS*, the authors claim, are “a complex rhetorical type, performing both ceremonial and deliberative functions.”¹² Mediation on the values from which assessments are made calls for ceremonial rhetoric. Legislative leadership asserted through the President’s program and policy recommendations calls for deliberative rhetoric. The importance of both these elements is beyond dispute. Ceremonial rhetoric may be “a precursor to deliberative decision.”¹³ Because presidential policies need congressional and national support, through mediation on values, Presidents engage in a process by which “a collectivity of individuals comes to see itself as an entity . . . a nation—with an identity that unifies its members and distinguishes them as a group.”¹⁴ Without ceremonial elements policy recommendations have no clear basis and presidential legislative leadership is asserted through policy recommendations. Deliberation, that is, “the argumentative form associated with justifying new policy” is precisely what distinguishes a ceremonial address from policy address.¹⁵ Unlike mediation on values, assessment of information and deliberation are written into the constitutional provision that calls the President to “give to the Congress information” and recommend in their *SOTUS* measures that are “necessary and expedient.” Campbell and Jamieson argue that “[d]eliberative argument pivots on the issue of expediency, specifically, which policy is best able to address identified problems, which policy is best able to address identified problems, which policy will produce more beneficial than evil consequences, and which is most practical, given available resources.”¹⁶ In short, a programmatic speech offers a recital of proposals and programs. A thematic speech is a discussion of the assump-

11. *Ibid.*, 54.

12. *Ibid.*, 68.

13. *Ibid.*, 29.

14. *Ibid.*, 54–55.

15. *Ibid.*, 29.

16. *Ibid.*

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tions and premises that go into the development of policies. The appropriate balance of the ceremonial (inspirational, thematic) and deliberative (specific, programmatic) rhetoric is an important requirement of the SOTU, if the President wants to assert his legislative leadership. If no policies are proposed, the SOTU resembles the inaugural address. The SOTUS delivered at the end of the President's tenure may include farewell remarks.

THE RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY: A DIFFERENT VIEW

“There is no limit to what a man can do or where he can go, if he doesn't mind who gets the credit.” President Reagan reportedly displayed a plaque with this proverbial aphorism on his Oval Office desk. Because of the nature of the office, it is always the President that gets the credit. The President alone does not make the presidency, however. With the President as its head, the institution of the presidency is made of an aggregate of people who work together as one whole body system that cannot be separated. Presidents rely on their staff for support they need to govern effectively.

Ego attachment to drafting in government may be painful and frustrating. Drafting presidential speeches and preparing the President for the presentation of a speech is a collegiate process. Often the quality of the President's speech is only as good as the quality of his speechwriting stable. Although speechwriters assist chief executives in drafting speeches, the speech belongs to the President. Speeches can range from “Rose Garden rubbish,” a minor presidential speech, to the substantive policy statement, such as the State of the Union Address. The SOTU is the only constitutionally-mandated institutional device suited to the demands of the separation of powers, whose form and development reflect the changing understanding of the President's role in the deliberative process. The shift from the pre-20th century constitutional to the modern Rhetorical Presidency is best exemplified by the developments which took place in the State of the Union Address.

The process that leads to the final draft of the State of the Union, as President Eisenhower's speechwriter Bryce N. Harlow pointed out, is “awfully

convoluted ... an orgy.”¹⁷ The preparation of the State of the Union, the Economic Report and the Budget Report, all of which take place simultaneously, is “the toughest season in the White House.”¹⁸ The heart of a President’s agenda and program is conveyed in these three documents. As Bryce Harlow remembered,

In the ordinary White House year, the most difficult time begins along about mid-September, and runs to the end of January. This is the period of gestation in the White House. The preparations are being made for these great messages that the President must send each year, to pinpoint his programs for the country, to lay out the course for the United States. He must tie down his own administrative process, re-examine what he’s been doing, prepare his budget, and then tell America where, in his best judgment, the country should go. The process begins in the formulation of programs, and in the decision of which programs are the most important ones, the most obtainable ones for the next year, and it’s a very difficult time. It reaches its crescendo right about Christmas. So in all the so-called holiday season, the White House is a real torment, every year.¹⁹

The SOTU, it must be stressed, is no ordinary speech. As the President’s fundamental policy statement, it requires the White House to slow down and reach out to the whole government and beyond it. Despite the fact that the modern presidency may have become more complex in terms of its organization: the number of the White House staff increased along with the increasing specialization of the staff’s functions, in the period investigated in the present work, wordsmiths, understood as experts whose main area of expertise is the art of persuasion, did not affect the content of the SOTU. Since the SOTU is connected to the execution of the President’s advisory

17. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3 of 3 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967: 143. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

18. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967: 99. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

19. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967: 99–100. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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legislative power, the President is expected to use the occasion to present his agenda for an incoming year, including legislative proposals. The traditional deadline by which the Presidents present the SOTU causes the White House to fulfill the annual duty regardless of the circumstances.

The progression of the President's term, however, is beset with significant constraints and challenges, all of which contribute to the toughest season in the White House. There is no routine about producing the SOTU. Moreover, the shift to popular leadership and concomitant technological developments gave the President access to a broad audience. Consequently, visible and audible aspects of presidential performance gained on importance. The present work partially confirms that claim. For better or worse, modern leadership is *visual leadership* and visual leadership requires more than *mere* actions and words. To assure the best delivery, preparation process may involve intensive rehearsals with the teleprompter that allow the President to maintain eye contact with the audience; proper lightening, make up, appropriate apparel, but also, a skilled delivery. As the present work demonstrates, however, not all modern Presidents would be equally concerned with these aspects. A tendency to go beyond words to pay increased attention to looks, apparel, and gestures depends on many factors, including personal preferences, political circumstances and presidential popularity. Thus general claims about the Rhetorical Presidency do not necessarily apply to individual presidencies examined in the present study. Each President makes his own unique contribution to the Rhetorical Presidency and is in different measure affected by some of the consequences associated with the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency and its impact on speechwriting and the presentation of the SOTU. As Halford R. Ryan suggested, "substantial case studies should be attempted to offer findings that may be later utilized to codify the practices of the Rhetorical Presidency."²⁰ The present work is one of such studies.

Because nowadays the flood of speeches is pressed upon the US Presidents, the speeches devalued and demeaned. Yet, if nowadays the Rhetorical

20. Halford R. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 3. Ryan also stressed the importance of audience in the Rhetorical Presidency.

Presidency is associated with negative developments that, as Jeffrey Tulis²¹ argues, emptied political discourse of its content, the present study of the processes by which the SOTU is produced and presented challenges that claim. In fact, these processes embody the essence of the Wilsonian conception of “responsible government” that stresses genuine deliberation and cooperation of the entire government, including the President, policy experts, and speech-writers. This is what makes the preparatory process the toughest season in the White House. And this is also the main argument I have attempted to advance and provide evidence for in this work.

STATE OF THE UNION AND THE RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The SOTU played an important part in the evolution of the Rhetorical Presidency. The beginning of the American tradition of an annual presidential Address to the Legislature dates back to the second session of the first Congress when on January 8, 1790, George Washington, the first President of the United States, delivered his precedent speech to the assembled Congress in the Senate Chamber of the New York’s Federal Hall. The idea to inform the Legislature on the condition of the state derives, as some scholars have argued, from “the royal act of communicating with parliament.”²² The so-called Speech from the Throne, King’s or Queen’s Speech and officially known as the Royal Address, probably originated in medieval England and became the address that the Sovereign made at the opening of each Parliament. The reason for giving the speech was to explain why the House of Lords and the Commons had been summoned to the royal presence and then to give a “state of the nation” address; thus in that sense the Royal Address would be the ancestor of that delivered by US Presidents.²³ When, without debate,

21. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*.

22. C. Ellis Stevens, *Sources of the Constitution of the United States Considered in Relation to Colonial and English History* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 158.

23. This has been suggested by Christine Riding, Curator at Tate Britain, London, in personal communication. For more information on the Speech from the Throne, see also: Robert

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the Framers of the Constitution imposed on the President a constitutional duty “from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient,” they succeeded, Seymour H. Fersh argues, “in having placed before the lawmakers and the nation a continuous series of yearly assessments from the Chief Executive.”²⁴

Despite its allegedly British origins, the “Speech from the White House” has not become a mere American imitation of the monarch’s Speech from the Throne.²⁵ The clause calling for information to Congress evolved and it can also be traced back to Article XIX of the New York Constitution of 1777.²⁶ The effects of the New York Constitution on Art. 2, sec. 3 of the US Constitution may have been far greater than it may appear. Although the Federal Constitution only vaguely addressed—“from time to time”—the regularity with which the Presidents were to address the Congress, the New York Constitution, which became an important source for the Federal Constitution, explicitly specified that the Address to the Legislature should occur “at every session.” The “from time to time” became to be understood as “at the beginning of each legislative session of Congress.” Given the influence of the New York Constitution on the Federal Constitution, one may also reflect upon the role of Gouverneur Morris in channeling certain ideas from the New York Constitution to the Federal Convention of 1787. Gouverneur

P. Weber, “The long-Term Dynamics of Societal Problem-Solving: A Content-Analysis of British Speeches from the Throne, 1689–1972,” *European Journal of Political Research* 10, no. 4 (December 1982): 387–405. Also, a presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin claims that the State of the Union “derived from the idea that the king in Britain used to give at the opening of the parliament a statement from the throne. So when our first presidents came into office, George Washington and John Adams did the same thing; a statement from the presidential throne.” Online NewsHouse: State of the Union Preview, February 3, 1997, retrieved on August 6, 2007 from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/whitehouse/stateunion2-3.html>.

24. Seymour H. Fersh, *The View from the White House. A Study of the presidential State of the Union Messages* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1961), V.

25. *Ibid.*, 78.

26. *Ibid.* That article provided that: “it shall be the duty of the governor to inform the legislature, at every session, of the condition of the State, so far as may respect his department; to recommend such matters to their consideration as shall appear to him to concern its good government, welfare, and prosperity.” In subsequent New York’s Constitutions, the phrasing of this clause changed but the idea has persisted.

Morris, a Founding Father who was to be the most influential in creating the Presidency—he was a most important member of the Committee of Style and Revision which decided on the Constitution’s final wording during the Federal Convention—made significant contributions to the New York Constitution. Most importantly, however, Gouverneur Morris was the only member of the Federal Convention who can be credited with phrasing the final wording of the provision calling the President to inform Congress on the State of the Union.²⁷

Although the Constitution does not specify the manner in which the President should provide Congress with information on the State of the Union, the first President, in fact, imposed on Congress the manner of communication; Washington made the execution of this constitutional duty dependent on the work of Congress and set the dynamic for future interactions between the legislative and the executive branches. George Washington interpreted the provision to the effect that the conveyance of “Information of the State of the Union” was to be in the form of an oral address, delivered personally by the President to the Congress assembled at the beginning of congressional session; the choice of time and place was, however, left to the convenience of Congress. John Adams followed in Washington’s footsteps and delivered the speech in person. In 1797, the presentation of the address in reply to President Adams’ Annual Message was “accompanied by a new feature, the serving of refreshments.” *The Aurora* reported that President served cakes

27. What today remains the best single source of the Convention proceedings is Max Farrand’s *Records of the Constitutional Convention of 1787*. In Volume III, p. 651, of his *Records*, Farrand writes, “Everything embodied in the final draft of the Constitution is to be traced through the Index by the Clauses of the Constitution.” The evolution of Clause 1, Art. II, sec. 3 can be traced, as Farrand provides (Vol. III, p. 644), on the following pages in respectively volume I and II: Vol. I – 21, (63, 66), 67, (70, 226), 230, (236), 244, (247, 292) and Vol. II – 23, (32), 116, (121), 132, (134), 145, 146, 158, 171, 185, (398), 404, (411), 419, 420, 547, 553, 574, 600, 660. For the development of the constitutional provision mandating the State of the Union, see: Iwona Świąteczak-Wasilewska, “The Constitutional Origins of the State of the Union Address” in *Ideology and Rhetoric. Constructing America*, ed. Bożenna Chylińska (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009): 293–306.

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and Madeira.²⁸ President Adams was aware of the need for ritual as a firm basis for the new government.

The nature of presidential rhetoric in the nineteenth century reflected the general constitutional theory based on the principles of *republicanism*, *independence of the executive*, *demagoguery* and *separation of powers*. Presidential policy rhetoric such as the State of the Union Address (then known as the Annual Message) would be addressed principally to Congress. Even if some Presidents would try to speak to the people through these messages, they would still be directed in the first instance to Congress, and the direct appeal to the people would be constrained by the written form and the character of the immediate audience. Embodying the demands of republicanism, presidential rhetoric to Congress would be public (available to all) and popular (fashioned for all). Rhetoric addressed primarily to the people—proclamations, inaugural addresses—are not mentioned in the Constitution, but they developed along the lines of constitutional principle that emphasized popular instruction.²⁹ Their form was left for the President and Congress to be determined. Since the norms of communication were introduced by President Washington, they were considered constitutionally informed precedents for others to follow. Washington thus decided on the appropriate modes of rhetoric and the manner resembling a royal appearance.

The first phase of the formative era—the era of setting precedents for the legislative and executive branches—began with the Washington Administration and ended with the Adams Administration. The second formative phase, the so-called “testing phase,” began when Thomas Jefferson ascended to the presidency in 1801. Although the constitutional provision which mandates the State of the Union does not explicitly prescribe the form in which the President presents the Address, the “tradition of silence” initiated by Thomas Jefferson was the object of controversies.³⁰ Once Thomas Jefferson

28. Charles Warren, “How the President’s Speech to Congress was Instituted and Abandoned,” in *Odd Byways in American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 153.

29. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 51.

30. J. A. Hendrix, “Presidential Addresses to Congress: Woodrow Wilson and the Jefferso-

was elected to the office of the President of the United States, he “resolved to suppress what he considered a quasi-monarchical ceremony.”³¹ Not only did Jefferson refuse to deliver the Address in person, he required no reply to it.³²

President Thomas Jefferson discredited the old, monarchical ways by discontinuing the oral address. The changes in form proposed by Jefferson were the ultimate and legitimate expression of his different understanding of the limits of congressional and presidential power. In consequence of Jefferson’s decision, the power of the office declined with the concomitant increase in the power of Congress. By submitting to Congress a written message, Jefferson would still fulfill the constitutional obligation to inform the Congress; the Address would be delivered in the same locale to essentially the same audience. Jefferson decided to change the form of communicating with Congress for personal, political and other reasons. What might have been the key factor in Jefferson’s decision was the question of how Jefferson viewed the limits of the executive power and the nature of the physical interactions between the executive and the legislature. Jefferson’s understanding of the relations between the branches was that of harmony and cooperation. Since the practices of presidential personal Address and the formal reply to it had been criticized already in the early 1790s, both in Congress and by the public press for aping the British monarchy, Jefferson’s decision to abandon the speech reflects not only his concept of the congressional-executive relations but also his fear of an expanded executive and the possibility of transforming the government into a monarchy.³³ Opposed to the adoption of any practice that smacked of royal England, President Jefferson directed his secretary Meriwether Lewis, to hand the Speaker of the House “a Letter, accompanying

nian Tradition,” *The Southern Speech Journal XXXI*, no. 4 (Summer 1966): 285.

31. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., “Annual Messages of the Presidents: Major Themes of American History,” in *The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents 1790–1966*, ed. Fred L. Israel, Volume 1: 1790–1860 (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1966), xiv.

32. President Jefferson discontinued the practice of personal delivery of the Annual Message, as it was called well until the twentieth century, and the messages of all subsequent Presidents until President Wilson were read by the House clerks.

33. Warren, “How the President’s Speech to Congress was Instituted and Abandoned,” 143.

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a Communication, in writing . . .”³⁴ The said Letter and Communication were subsequently read and referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union. In that letter, President Jefferson explained the official reasons for his decision to discontinue the practice of a personal address and a formal reply to his address:

The circumstances under which we find ourselves at this place rendering inconvenient the mode heretofore practiced, of making by personal address the first communications between the Legislative and Executive branches, I have adopted that by Message, as used on all subsequent occasions through the session. In doing this I have had principal regard to the convenience of the Legislature, to the economy of their time, to their relief from the embarrassment of immediate answers, on subjects not yet fully before them, and to the benefits thence resulting to the public affairs. Trusting that a procedure founded in these motives, will meet their approbation, I beg leave, through you, sir, to communicate the enclosed Message, with the documents accompanying it, to the honorable the Senate, and pray you to accept, for yourself and them, the homage of my high respect and consideration.³⁵

Explaining his decision, Jefferson mentioned the legislators’ convenience. As far as the presidential presence in Congress to deliver the Annual Message was an accepted way of expressing the presidential pledge of cooperation with the Houses, the “address in reply”, written by a special committee in each House, debated by the entire Congress, and in its approved version read to the President at his residence within a week after the presidential speech, was under constant criticism for the pomp associated with monarchical practices. In addition, following congressional address in reply, the President would send Congress a letter in which he would express his appreciation and thanks

34. *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U. S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774–1875*; *Annals of Congress, House of Representatives, 7th Congress, 1st Session*, retrieved on August 15, 2008 from <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=011/llac011.db&recNum=153>. The Library of Congress.

35. *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651–1827*. Thomas Jefferson, December 8, 1801, Annual Message, retrieved on August 16, 2008 from <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mtj.mtjbib010808>. The Library of Congress.

for the reply. Jefferson reasoned that by declining to pay Congress his annual visit, the Congress would not have to traverse the swamps either. Rather than on the reply, the Congress could focus on the work that it was elected to do. Thus, Jefferson's objection to personally delivered addresses "arose out of his opposition, not to the speech but to its sequel—to the practice adopted by the Congress in making Addresses in reply."³⁶ Whatever the causes for Jefferson's decision, however, or as Hamilton put it: "whether this has proceeded from pride or from humility, from a temperate love of reform, or from a wild spirit of innovation," the written message initiated by President Jefferson, remained the practice until 1913, when President Wilson revived the oral Address to Congress.³⁷

The presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829–1837) marks the transition period in the presidency and the form of communication. The State of the Union begins to be used "as a vehicle with which Presidents could assert themselves in the policymaking process."³⁸ President Jackson's attempt to appeal to the people over the heads of the Congress was objected to by the Senate because the body decided that it was a popular appeal in the guise of an official communication.³⁹ By the nineteenth century doctrine, the Presidents were required to address the Congress in the first instance. Popular rhetoric was seen as a manifestation of demagoguery, which could be dangerous to republican governance. As Jeffrey Tulis suggests, the nineteenth-century appreciation of the political importance of formality extended to "unofficial" or "informal" speech behavior by Presidents in the twentieth century.⁴⁰ For President Jackson the nineteenth century doctrine was a constraint because Jackson liked popular speaking. In delivering about seventy policy speeches

36. Warren, "How the President's Speech to Congress was Instituted and Abandoned," 143. For a full account of the State of the Union history, see: Świątczak-Wasilewska, "Constitutional Origins of Soru Address," 293.

37. Alexander Hamilton, "The Examination of the President's Message at the Opening of Congress December 7, 1801" in *The Examination Number 1*, Revised and Corrected by the Author (New York: Printed and Published at the Office of the *New-York Evening Post*, 1802), page following Preface, not numbered.

38. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 26.

39. *Ibid.*, 58.

40. *Ibid.*, 59.

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on the stump, Andrew Johnson violated nearly every element of the prevailing doctrine.⁴¹

Theodore Roosevelt's presidency constituted the middle way between the statecraft of the nineteenth century and the Rhetorical Presidency that would follow. Theodore Roosevelt must be seen as a new kind of President. His extensive use of popular rhetoric marked the beginning of a new form of leadership. Roosevelt pursued a strategy of appealing to the people regarding specific legislative matters. His theory was that popular rhetoric was necessary to withstand popular pressure; that inspirational rhetoric was appropriate to crisis politics and the reestablishment of normal politics. His Annual Message of 1901 was perhaps a harbinger of what was coming. Following that message, one newspaper commented that it was "indeed one of the most striking presidential utterances that the American people have been called upon to read for several years. The positive tone of the message and its directness of style caused it to resemble a speech rather than a State paper; not a stump speech, but the spoken review of the State of the Union by one who addresses himself straight at his task, eschewing oratorical effects."⁴² Roosevelt is said to have written the speech himself from beginning to end.⁴³ For the first time, the message went to print in full. Until then, people could only read the excerpts of the President's message in newspapers. Although not personally delivered, Roosevelt's message of 1901 was landmark:

Not in many years have the members of the House listened with such rapt attention to the annual message of a President of the United States as they did today to the reading of the first message of Pres. Roosevelt. . . . The reading occupied two hours, but not over a dozen members left their seats until it was concluded. Several times there was applause and at the conclusion there was an enthusiastic demonstration on the republican side⁴⁴

41. *Ibid.*, 83.

42. Newspaper clipping, Presidential Papers Microfilm. Theodore Roosevelt Papers. Reel 459. Series 15: Misc. Vol. 4 (1900 Feb 6–1901 Aug 18). The Roosevelt Study Center.

43. Newspaper clipping, *The Commercial Adviser*, New York, Dec. 3, *ibid.*

44. A newspaper clipping. *Washington* 3, 1901, *ibid.*

Theodore Roosevelt was thus the first President to successfully appeal “over the heads” of Congress; he would use his bully pulpit, take his case to the people at large to secure legislation, as he did in the case of his rhetorical campaigns to secure legislation to regulate the railroads. Unlike Woodrow Wilson, Roosevelt did not deliver any of his annual messages or other communications to Congress in person. He kept on sending written documents that had been in existence since Thomas Jefferson began them in 1801. The defiance of tradition would have been “the sort of thing Theodore Roosevelt would have liked to do if only he’d thought of it.”⁴⁵

It was not until Woodrow Wilson that the new constitutional theory would provide political legitimacy to new rhetorical norms. While the Founders’ understanding of the political system was shaped by constitutional principles of *republicanism*, *independence of the executive*, *demagoguery* and *separation of powers*, the reversal of the original meaning of these principles by President Wilson gave rise to the Rhetorical Presidency.⁴⁶ President Woodrow Wilson’s new theory of governance would make popular rhetoric routine. The SOTU, in particular, would become “one of the instruments best suited to the exercise of presidential leadership.”⁴⁷ In reviving the practice of personal delivery of the State of the Union, Wilson indicated that the formerly written policy rhetoric addressed principally to Congress would now be spoken and addressed principally to the people.⁴⁸

As the Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels from March 28, 1913 indicate, Wilson’s chief reason for calling the Congress in extraordinary session was not to make history by shattering a precedent, but “that the business interests of the country might know what changes would be made in the tariff so they

45. John Dos Passos, *Mr. Wilson’s War* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963), 77. The Roosevelt Study Center.

46. Jeffrey Tulis explains in detail the differences between the Founders’ and Wilson’s understanding of the four doctrines of governance and there is no compelling reason to duplicate his explanation here.

47. Karlyn Kohrs and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words: Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 51.

48. This norm did not affect special messages, proclamations, executive orders or other documents.

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might adjust themselves to it.”⁴⁹ Then on April 4 in another Cabinet Meeting, the President “intimated that he might deliver his tariff message in person in Congress but left it an open question to be decided whether he would do so.”⁵⁰ As far as the newspapermen were “very grateful,” the President’s decision to deliver the Message on Tariffs in person was criticized even by his own party for “reviving an old custom in the nature of an “address from the throne” and “restoring federalism in America.”⁵¹ His critics hoped that it was “the only breach of the perfectly simple and democratic custom of Jefferson,” which was more American than the old pomposities between the White House and the Capitol.⁵² The “only thing federalistic about it,” Wilson pointed out, “was delivering the message in person.”⁵³ The ceremony was reportedly “very brief and exceedingly simple and the whole proceedings had about them an air of democratic simplicity.”⁵⁴ While the first two Presidents would be accompanied by their entire Cabinets, Wilson would be accompanied only by a Secret Service man, Mr. Sloane. Wilson would require no other congressional answer to his nine-minute speech than the enactment of the legislation he recommended. The way Wilson addressed the Congress reflected the new understanding of the President’s role, the separation of power concept, and the new way of governing. Wilson’s reasons for this precedent decision would be in fact a reflection of his theories and observations collected during his earlier academic life. Once elected President, he would start to put them to test.

Wilson’s interpretation of the four principles redefined presidential leadership and contributed to a greater interplay between representative and

49. David E. Cronon, ed., *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913–1921* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 15–16. The Roosevelt Study Center.

50. *Ibid.*, 22.

51. Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Vol. 27, 1913* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 268. The Roosevelt Study Center.

52. *The New York Times*, “President’s visit nettles senators,” April 8, 1913: 1. The Roosevelt Study Center.

53. Link, *Papers of W. Wilson*, 268.

54. *The New York Times*, “Congress Cheers Greet Wilson. House Floor and Galleries are Packed to Hear President’s Oral Message,” April 9, 1913: 1. The Roosevelt Study Center.

constituent. Interpretation for Wilson constituted the core of leadership and would serve the purpose of educating the constituent. Interaction with the public and public education have been over time made possible by the technological advancements, including radio and television. The President would become an interpreter of the public will and would explain that will to the people in a convincing, easily graspable, and persuasive way.

Unlike today when popular leadership is so central to modern theories of the presidency, the Founders did not want to establish a powerful executive who would derive his power from the role of popular leader. Popular leadership was looked down to and susceptible. For the Founders, a popular leader was synonymous with a *demagogue*—the term used with reference to a quality of leadership with excessive use of passionate appeals to the prejudices, emotions, fears and expectations of the public.⁵⁵ *Demagoguery* posed a danger to democracy by exposing the leaders to the influence of the temporary whims and desires of the public. Woodrow Wilson’s understanding of governance put the question of *demagoguery* in a new light. Demagoguery in times of crises might have been encouraged, but not in “normal” times. What would in Wilson’s vision distinguish a leader-interpreter from a demagogue in normal times were the nature of his appeal and the character of the leader. While a demagogue appeals to a momentary popular passion, a leader appeals to a durable majority sentiment.

Another constitutional principle redefined by President Wilson that affected the manner of presenting the State of the Union concerned the President’s constitutional role in the legislative process. The principle of the *separation of powers* was for Wilson the defect of American politics, which failed to promote true deliberation in the legislature and impeded energy in the executive. For Wilson, the Founders sought balance in “a machine-like system” while in fact Wilson found that system dominated by Congress and absence of leadership. Woodrow Wilson’s decision to *go public* would also redress what he had believed to be the basic defect of the American system—the leaderless

55. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 28, after Caesar.

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government.⁵⁶ Wilson perceived of the government as a living organ whose life is dependent on cooperation among men with differentiated functions but with a common task.⁵⁷ He suggested that separation must be replaced by cooperation of the President and the Congress; deliberation in Congress would be restored by presidential leadership and the President would be energized by Congress, which in turn, would back his policies. Leadership and deliberation represent the major purposes of Wilson's theory. Unlike the Founders, Wilson did not see conflict between these two functions but dependence. His goal was to "promote leadership through rhetoric," to enhance "energy in the executive," even at the risk of the possibility of demagoguery.⁵⁸ This premise represents a major transformation and reversal of the founding perspective.

No President before Wilson's Tariff Reform speech on April 8, 1913 had

56. Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson. Life and Letters*. Vol. 4. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1931), 99. Roosevelt Study Center.

57. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 121.

58. A twenty-three year old Woodrow Wilson, in his article on "Cabinet Government in the United States" set out his belief that "there is no one in Congress to speak for the nation. Congress is a conglomeration of inharmonious elements; a collection of men representing each his neighborhood, each his local interest; an alarmingly large portion of its legislation is 'special'; all of it is at best only a limping compromise between the conflicting interests of the innumerable localities represented." In his 1885 scholarly publication *Congressional Government*, Wilson pointed out the consequences arising from the separation of the legislative and executive powers built in the American Constitution: "Executive and legislature are separated by a hard and fast line, which sets them apart in what was meant to be independence, but has come to amount to isolation. Correspondence between them is carried on by means of written communications, which, like all formal writings, are vague, or by means of private examinations of officials in committee-rooms to which the whole House cannot be audience. No one who has read official documents needs to be told how easy it is to conceal the essential truth under the apparently candid and all-disclosing phrases of a voluminous and particularizing report; how different those answers are which are given with the tongue when the speaker is looking an assembly in the face." Wilson mentioned isolation of the executive and the legislature as obstacle to effective governing. President and Congress, he reasoned, to be effective must become more open, more public and more accessible to each other. President Wilson perceived the Annual Message as an instrument with which to achieve that goal. The personally delivered message, Wilson recognized, could be as a powerful instrument of presidential leadership: "If the President," Wilson argued, "has personal force and cares to exercise it, there is a tremendous difference between his [sic] message and the views of any other citizen either outside Congress or in it; that the whole country reads them and feels the writer speaks with an authority and a responsibility which the people themselves have given him." See: Campbell and Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words*, 52 and Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 132.

addressed the legislators in person since John Adams and no President had ever made public appeals to public opinion to put pressure on the Congress as Wilson did. His decision to influence the legislative process by personally delivering his speech to Congress was unprecedented.⁵⁹ In fact,

In all the precedent-breaking days in Washington, the corridors whispered that the man in the White House had such a surprising manner of approach and such different ways of doing things that a glossary was needed to enable the folks to get what he was driving at. This reached a crescendo when, discarding a custom of over a century, he went up to the Capitol and delivered his message in person. “Actually, he seems to think he can look us in the eye and hypnotize us to do his will,” said a Congressman—one who admitted that he could comprehend what Wilson was driving at. Wasn’t Wilson a Democrat? Was he not the heir of Jefferson, the original Democrat? Had not Jefferson discarded the practice of speaking his recommendations to Congress established by Washington? Had not Jefferson’s party criticized even the “Father of His Country” for aping royalty and delivering a message “from the throne”? Was all this Jeffersonian precedent to be scrapped by the New Jersey schoolmaster? They couldn’t understand.⁶⁰

Put succinctly, Roosevelt’s 1901 and Wilson’s 1912 State of the Union Addresses are illustrative of the changing understanding of the presidency and presidential rhetorical standards in the twentieth century. How deep and profound these new standards were is best reflected in Wilson’s decision to break the 112-years old “tradition of silence.”

In essence, the beginning of the twentieth century marks a shift from the constitutional presidency to the modern, public presidency, or “from a traditional, administrative, and unrhetoical office into a modern, expansive, and stridently rhetorical one in which incumbents routinely speak over the head of Congress and to the public to lead and to govern.”⁶¹ And “a crucial

59. Kendrick A. Clements, *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 35.

60. Josephus Daniels, *The Wilson Era: Years of War and After, 1917–1923* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 6–7.

61. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 19.

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shift in how the President related to both Congress and the public.”⁶² The State of the Union Address in the past had been a tedious experience of listening to clerks reading a rundown of departmental reports. The resumption of the oral address would turn the State of the Union Address into a public event and change the character of constitutional politics and the presidency in America.

THE RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY AS A THEORETICAL CONCEPT

The Rhetorical Presidency is one of the seminal ideas motivating research on the public presidency.⁶³ It is “a narrow and theory-dependent” construct, “rooted in the discipline of political science” and “grounded normatively in the US Constitution,” and whose object of study is the presidency.⁶⁴ The Rhetorical Presidency, as Theodore Otto Windt Jr. pointed out, “added another dimension to rhetorical studies beyond the analysis and criticism of presidential speeches and campaigns to the influence—both theoretical and practical—of rhetoric on the nature and conduct of the office itself.”⁶⁵ The Rhetorical Presidency is also “an institutional practice that has arisen within the presidency in the twentieth century.”⁶⁶ Rhetorical Presidency tells us how presidential rhetoric, that is public persuasion or public statements of the Presidents, including the *SORUS*, has changed the nature and conduct of the office.⁶⁷

62. Lewis L. Gould, *The Modern American Presidency* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 43.

63. Jeffrey E. Cohen, “Alternative Features: Comment on Terry Moe’s ‘The Revolution in Presidential Studies,’” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (December 2009): 725–35.

64. Martin J. Medhurst, “A Tale of Two Constructs: The Rhetorical Presidency Versus presidential Rhetoric” in Martin J. Medhurst ed., *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), xi–xii.

65. Theodore Otto Windt Jr., “Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1, The Media and the Presidency (Winter, 1986): 102.

66. Ryan, *Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Rhetorical Presidency*, 2.

67. Windt Jr., “Presidential Rhetoric,” 103, defines the discipline of presidential rhetoric as “the study of presidential public persuasion as it affects the ability of a President to exercise the powers of the office. . . . The raw materials for this study are the speeches of a President, press conferences, messages to Congress; in sum, the public statements by a President.”

An intellectual precursor of that interdisciplinary interest in the intersection of the presidency and the practice of rhetoric was “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency” written by James W. Ceaser, Glen E. Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis and Joseph M. Bessette. James Ceaser and other proponents of the concept of the Rhetorical Presidency attributed its rise to: 1) the modern doctrine of presidential leadership proposed by President Wilson; 2) the development of the mass media, which increased the size of and provided access to the audience and changed the mode of communicating with the public from the written word to the spoken word delivered in dramatic form; and 3) the modern presidential campaign.⁶⁸ For a common man to become known, he must travel, perform publicly, make speeches and build his political image. He gets into these habits while campaigning and they move with him to the White House.

The concept of the Rhetorical Presidency was given a formal explication in Jeffrey Tulis’ book, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, published in 1987. Scholars working within the Rhetorical Presidency construct are primarily concerned with the institution of the presidency as a constitutional office and turn to the US Constitution for normative guidance.⁶⁹ Although there has never been a non-Rhetorical Presidency and Presidents have always exercised their power through language, political rhetoric in the United States must be seen as a practical expression of a doctrine of governance dominant in a given time in history. The Rhetorical Presidency has been marked by patterns of presidential rhetoric.⁷⁰ When these patterns changed at the turn of the twentieth century, they marked a transformation of the constitutional order,

68. James W. Ceaser et al., “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 158–71.

69. Medhurst, “A Tale of Two Constructs,” xiii.

70. One needs to separate the concept of presidential rhetoric from the concept of the rhetorical presidency. The discipline of presidential rhetoric is “concerned with the study of presidential public persuasion.” The public statements by a President such as the speeches, press conference, messages to Congress constitute raw materials for the study of presidential rhetoric. Presidential rhetoric is “one of the powers available to the President.” The rhetorical presidency is concerned with the influence of rhetoric “on the nature and conduct of the office.” See: Theodore Otto Windt Jr., “Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 1, *The Media and the Presidency* (Winter 1986): 102–16.

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the executive office, the doctrine of presidential leadership, and triggered the rise of a plethora of rhetorical practices.⁷¹ Different conceptions of popular rhetoric in the nineteenth century and the twentieth century must thus be understood in the context of the changing conceptions of the political order.

The tendency to attempt to govern by means of direct rhetorical appeal was described by other scholars before Jeffrey Tulis. Theodore Lowi referred to it as *plebiscitary presidency* and Samuel Kernell proposed the concept of *going public*. Roderic Hart wrote about *the sound of leadership*. George Edwards coined the concept of *the public presidency*, and Bruce Mirnoff spoke of *the spectacle of leadership*. All these scholars, in essence, discussed the altered meaning of presidential leadership, a phenomenon whose central interest focused on, what Jeffrey Tulis described as the *Rhetorical Presidency*.⁷²

Richard Neustadt's study of *Presidential Power*, however, provided a new orientation to the study of the presidency and influenced the above-mentioned scholars. As Theodore Otto Windt Jr. argued, Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power* "placed the locus of presidential power in the President-as-persuader instead of residing solely in the formal legal powers or the political powers of the office."⁷³ Until Neustadt, scholars including Edward S. Corwin or Clinton L. Rossiter wrote about presidential powers, or the different "hats" the President wears in a conventional way, tracing them to the US Constitution, and viewing the President's job according to the categories of Chief Executive, Chief Legislator, Chief Diplomat, Chief of Party, Commander-in-Chief.⁷⁴

71. Jeffrey K. Tulis, "Revising the Rhetorical Presidency" in *Beyond the Rhetorical Presidency*, ed. Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996), 3.

72. Jeffrey K. Tulis, "Reflections on the Rhetorical Presidency" in *Speaking to the People. The Rhetorical Presidency in Historical Perspective*, ed. Richard J. Ellis (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 212.

73. Theodore Otto Windt Jr., "Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study" in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1, *The Media and the Presidency* (Winter, 1986), 103.

74. See, for instance: Edward S. Corwin, *The Constitution and What it Means Today* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Edward S. Corwin, *The President, Office and Powers: History and Analysis of Practice and Opinion* (New York: New York University Press, 1940). Clinton L. Rossiter, *The American Presidency* (New York: New American Library, 1956). Edward S. Corwin and Louis W. Koenig, *The Presidency Today* (New York: New York University Press, 1956). Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency* (Baltimore:

Neustadt on the other hand escapes the discussion of presidential power according to any category. He argues that the formal “ ‘powers’ are no guarantee of power.” The question Neustadt raises is “what a president can do to make his own will felt within his own Administration, what he can do, as one man among many, to carry his own choices through the maze of personalities and institutions called the government of the United States.” His famous dictum captures the essence of presidential power—“presidential power is the power to persuade.”⁷⁵ To get what the President wants requires bargaining and persuasion. President’s professional reputation and public prestige are his sources of power.

Theodore Lowi’s concept of the *plebiscitary presidency* can be traced to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who set its foundations and the initial directions.⁷⁶ In essence, it refers to a situation when the President succeeds in achieving his political goals through direct mass political methods and over the heads of the party leaders. The emergence of what Lowi called *the plebiscitary presidency* pushed political parties to the periphery of national politics. Lowi argued that presidential power emanates from citizen support measured through public opinion polls, the President’s personal involvement, his resort to mass communication, and a direct relationship with the masses through the available technology. The presidency ever since became to be seen as the central office in the country and “the only politically responsible organ of the government with the whole nation as its constituency.”⁷⁷ Now Americans would look to the President as responsible for formulating and implementing programs. With the decline of political parties, the presidency would become isolated and personal. Presidents would become personally

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). David E. Haight and Larry D. Johnston, ed., *The President: Roles and Powers* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1965).

75. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1961), vii. Neustadt traces the origins of that dictum to President Truman’s description of his experience as President, who said: “I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them. ... That’s all the powers of the President amount to.”

76. Theodore J. Lowi, *The Personal President: power invested, promised unfulfilled* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 65.

77. *Ibid.*, 75.

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involved in politics and would go outside the normal political channels to build personal organizations made up of enthusiastic political supporters. The plebiscitary presidency in short is a personal presidency.⁷⁸

Direct rhetorical leadership is an essential feature of governance today; the essence of the modern presidency and a principal tool of governance.⁷⁹ Wilson's reinterpretation of the President's role was meant to activate presidential leadership in the legislative process and his personally delivered speeches, including the *SOTU*, were a means to that end.

Samuel Kernell defines the strategy of *going public* as active and direct presidential leadership. *Going public* is "a class of activities that presidents engage in as they promote themselves and their policies before the American public." A televised press conference, a special prime-time address to the nation, or a speech before a business community are only a few examples of going public. These activities are intended "to place the President and his message before the American people in a way that enhances his chances of success in Washington."⁸⁰ As a result, the increased use of rhetoric: radio or TV speeches, news releases, press conferences, or addresses to the people and Congress, produce an impression that "speaking is governing."⁸¹ In spite of the implication that the Rhetorical Presidency is based on words, not power, Jeffrey Tulis suggests that rhetorical power is "a very special case of executive power." When rhetoric is connected to the exercise of power, just

78. *Ibid.*, 115.

79. Denton and Woodward, *Political Communication in America*, 184. According to Jeffrey E. Cohen, "Alternative Features: Comment on 'The Revolution in Presidential Studies,'" 727–28, "Proponents of the modern presidency concept stress special circumstances, primarily the confluence of the emergency of the Great Depression with the arrival of Franklin D. Roosevelt, to explain this modernization moment. The modern presidency scholars list the characteristics that distinguish the modern from the earlier, traditional presidency, such as the president's increased unilateral policy-making capacity, the accumulation of staff resources, the president's role in setting the national policy agenda, the greater involvement of the president in the legislative policy-making process, and the greater public visibility of the president." See: Cohen, "Alternative Features: Comment on 'The Revolution in Presidential Studies,'" 725–35.

80. Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington: CQ Press, 1997), ix.

81. James W. Ceaser et al., *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 159.

like the SOTU is connected to the execution of the advisory legislative power, presidential speech can be effective.

Although presidential legislative leadership has become a permanent fixture of American politics and nowadays Presidents present their SOTUS in person, significant legislative victories are not likely and they are not always possible, especially for an outgoing or an incoming President. When President Wilson personally delivered his Addresses, he reasoned that he could persuade the Congress to act on his proposals by appealing to the people through Congress, and thus garner support for his policies. Empirically, however, the effect of the President's speech on citizens and citizen impact on the success of a policy initiated by the President is difficult to demonstrate. Interestingly, President Thomas Jefferson, one of the most effective legislative leaders in the history of the US presidency, did not think it was necessary to appear personally in Congress to be effective.⁸²

In addition, the State of the Union in general tends to have little impact on presidential standing in the polls.⁸³ However much attention the President can garner, there is little assurance that the Congress will accede. Importantly, Congress generally does not enact most of the legislation proposed in the SOTU, if in fact, the President proposes any substantive legislation at all.⁸⁴ In

82. Thomas Jefferson was a master of indirect tactics in the field of legislative leadership. He "induced former colleagues to run for Congress in order to have a corps of sponsors for his measures. Legislative committees were constituted strictly in accordance with his wishes. Messages that he prepared in Cabinet were forwarded to the committees of Congress by his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin, the administration's watchdog and liaison in legislative matters. Jefferson supervised the progress of his measures in Congress at all stages until their enactment. Caucuses were held at his direction, sometimes under his chairmanship, and their frequency increased. Floor leaders, an invention of his administration, co-operated at every turn." See: Edward S. Corwin and Louis W. Koenig, *The Presidency Today* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 85.

83. A Gallup analysis of polling data for each President from Carter to G. W. Bush shows that in the 22 cases analyzed by Gallup, there were 11 instances in which a President's post-State of the Union approval rating was lower than what he had before the speech. See: "Does the State of the Union Affect Presidential Popularity?" January 13, 2004, retrieved on April 11, 2009 from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/content/print.aspx?ci=10303>.

84. Although specific data on the entire period of study is unavailable, a Gallup analysis of polling data going back to the Carter Administration shows that "amid all the pageantry and fanfare associated with the occasion, State of the Union Addresses generally do little to help boost a President's ratings. That may be because of the fact that a President's partisan

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general, Congress does not feel pressured to enact the President's proposals as it remains the ultimate authority over legislation. Congress usually follows the President's lead only in crisis, in foreign affairs and national security and in rare occurrences of circumstances favorable to the President (Johnson 1965 and '66, majorities in the Houses of Congress). The President's problem in domestic policy, Aaron Widavsky argues, "is to get congressional support for the programs he prefers."⁸⁵

Roderick Hart claims that "public speech no longer attends the process of governance—it is governance."⁸⁶ Presidents Truman through Reagan had used the powers of communication to advance their political goals. Speaking became a new form of governance and politics "an endless exchange of public conversations. . . . Presidents exert influence over their environment only by speaking."⁸⁷ Presidential power is expressed through speech and it is the tool of presidential leadership. As a result of the revolution in communication, Hart points out, few presidential public speeches are products of careful deliberation; rather, most of them are products of ad hoc thinking. Nowadays, he claims, either the setting of a speech or presidential staffs, audience composition or political traditions, or media coverage, and not the thoughts and feelings of presidents themselves, dictate what a President says.⁸⁸ The Rhetorical Presidency thus poses dilemmas for governance. Presidents, Hart demonstrates, speak more and more but instead of providing leadership, they offer only a "sound" of leadership.

The Rhetorical Presidency is thus seen as a force that led to the decay of political discourse and the erosion of the deliberative processes. A presidential speech may attempt just to please public opinion. In consequence of the

supporters are much more likely to watch the event than are supporters of the opposition party." Gallup Poll News Service, Jeffrey M. Jones, February 2, 2005, "State of the Union Speeches Rarely Affect presidential Support."

85. Aaron Widavsky, "The Two Presidencies," retrieved on August 4, 2014 from www.csuchico.edu/~ccturner/syllabi/TwoPresidencies.pdf. Widavsky's article was originally published in 1966 in *Trans-actions*, Vol. 4 no. 2.

86. Roderick P. Hart, *The Sound of Leadership. Presidential Communication in the Modern Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 14.

87. *Ibid.*, 5.

88. *Ibid.*, 212.

decay, as Jeffrey Tulis argues, Congress will be left out of the deliberative stages of policy formation and rhetorical imperatives will play a larger role. The Congress will be forced to respond over the head of the President. The opposition response following the Soru best illustrates the situation when both the President and the Congress compete to please or manipulate the public. The content of a political speech designed to appeal to public opinion, especially in oral, visible performance is shaped by imperatives of rhetoric. Issues are defined in terms of “the needs of persuasion rather than the need to develop a discourse suitable for the illumination and exploration of real issues.”⁸⁹ Because of the stress on rhetoric rather than exploration of issues, Tulis reveals, presidential speeches have become “the issues and events of modern politics” rather than the medium through which issues and events are discussed.⁹⁰

The increased demand for the President’s speeches in the Rhetorical Presidency necessitated the use of speechwriters and expanded their number. Although ghostwriting is not new and can be traced to the first presidency, what is new is the employment of wordsmiths who translate policies into persuasive prose. Nowadays, Jeffrey Tulis argues, the imperatives of rhetoric structure policy, and the speechwriting staff plays an increasingly central role in the making of policy in the White House. In fact, “the speech writing shop has become an institutional locus of policymaking in the White House, not merely an annex to policymaking.”⁹¹ The problem with wordsmiths, however, is that they may not have substantive policy expertise, but rather specialize in the art of persuasion. The reliance on wordsmiths thus generates questions of the consequences of using language experts in policymaking.

The mass media facilitated the development of the Rhetorical Presidency. The stress on visible and audible aspects of presidential leadership altered the character of presidential leadership. As Bruce Miroff pointed out, a significant part of the presidency “revolves around the enactment of leadership as a

89. Tulis, *Rhetorical Presidency*, 180.

90. *Ibid.*, 177–79.

91. *Ibid.*, 185.

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spectacle.”⁹² This new understanding of presidential leadership could be traced to George Edwards’ concept of “the public presidency,” in which presidential relations with the American public play a central role. The media have become the principal vehicle for presidential spectacle. The President enjoys the natural incumbent advantage and receives most coverage than anyone else in American life. Television, in particular, gave the President the means to communicate directly with a large national audience and reinforced the shift from written communication to verbal, dramatic, performance. The primary purpose of spectacles is to construct meanings for the American public; to display impressive qualities of larger-than-life-characters in an appealing way.

Since television provides unlimited opportunities to display impressive qualities, presidential spectacles involve a great deal of advance planning and preparation. Not only are the Presidents’ utterances scripted in advance of their performance. After months of efforts of speech preparation, another challenge is to show the President at his best on television. Intensive rehearsals are scheduled prior to the President’s delivery. A range of issues is taken into consideration: the ability of using a teleprompter, the length of the Address, right shots of the President, television picture’s frame, right pace of speaking, gestures, pauses, lip-wetting, lighting, make-up, facial expressions, the speaker’s tone of voice, and body language. The preparation of the President for the presentation of the State of the Union Address is, in fact, no less important as the preparation of the text.

A spectacle, as Miroff argues, is “a kind of symbolic event, one in which particular details stand for broader and deeper meanings.”⁹³ What distinguishes a spectacle is “the centrality of character and actions . . . that establish their public identities.” Actions in a spectacle, Miroff pointed out, are “meaningful not for what they achieve but for what they signify.” Spectacles are not meant to produce result, but rather, to feature gestures, and these gestures are

92. Bruce Miroff, “The presidential spectacle” in *The presidency and the political system*, 7th ed., ed. M. Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2003), 278–302.

93. Ibid.

important for the meaning they convey.⁹⁴ Presidents are the principal figures in presidential spectacles. Usually, the President does not achieve legislative success by *merely* delivering his SOTU personally. However, the President's personal appearance before Congress symbolically manifests his respect for American political tradition, the Constitution and the President's role in the legislative process. As Supreme Court justices and members of Congress are seated before the President, the setting represents the three living symbols of the US government.

Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz noted that a spectacle possesses “a narrowness of focus, a limited set of appropriate responses, and ... a minimal level of interaction. What there is to see is very clearly exhibited; spectacle implies a distinction between the roles of performers and audience.”⁹⁵ The audience cannot interrupt a spectacle and it cannot become a performer. A spectacle is not designed for mass audiences. And this distinction is clearly manifested as the President delivers his State of the Unions. Although nowadays the media broadcast the State of the Union Address across America, the SOTU remains a very personal, rather than a communal event. The SOTU was originally intended to be a channel of executive and legislative communication and consultation. Direct citizen participation and generation of mass emotions are significantly obstructed.

RESEARCH APPROACH AND THE METHOD

The concept of the Rhetorical Presidency explored in the present work can be located in *Presidential Studies*, which examines all aspects of the American presidency by employing diverse inter- and multidisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches, including quantitative and qualitative research.⁹⁶

94. *Ibid.*

95. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 93.

96. A single definition of *Presidential Studies (PS)* does not exist. Scholars in the field agree to basic facts, such as the object of study (the American presidency) and that it can be studied from multiple disciplinary perspectives. For several decades, the intellectual tradition of *PS* was profoundly shaped by one book—Richard Neustadt's *Presidential Power*.

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The presidency as a subfield of political science raised particular interest in the '60s and '70s, the period marked by the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963 and culminating with Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon in September 1974. Dwight Eisenhower's 1969 call for programs on the American Presidency for "students old and young," inspired the creation of centers, public policy think tanks and institutions dedicated to the study of the American President throughout the United States.⁹⁷ Today *Presidential*

Terry M. Moe argues, however, that for more than a decade now there has been a revolution in the study of the presidency and in result of the revolution, quantitative studies have become more common. See: Terry, M. Moe, "The Revolution in Presidential Studies," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 39, no. 4 (December 2009): 701–24. The definition of PS used in the present section is based on several definitions, including *The Presidential Studies Quarterly's* definition of its mission: "Presidential Studies Quarterly is an interdisciplinary journal of theory and research focusing on the American presidency. ... The Quarterly invites papers employing diverse theoretical and methodological approaches, including both quantitative and qualitative work." For the complete definition of its mission, see *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 31, no. 4 (December 2001): 3, retrieved on June 20, 2014 from http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/2960_12psq01.pdf.

Hofstra University definition of a minor in Presidential Studies "designed for students with a keen interest in U. S. presidential leadership and policy-making, who seek to examine executive politics from multiple disciplinary perspectives. The minor will help students develop the critical thinking skills necessary for advanced graduate work in presidential studies, politics and policy making. The program will place students at the forefront of the field through individually designed plans of study that will combine analysis of existing scholarship with primary research, including archives and interviews." Retrieved on June 20, 2014 from <http://news.hofstra.edu/2014/02/11/hofstra-swears-in-presidential-studies-minor/>.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock definition of Presidential Studies minor—"Presidential Studies: a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the president as an individual, the presidency as an institution, and the broader contexts in which the individual and institution operate." Retrieved on May 10, 2009 from <http://ualr.edu/presidents/index.html>.

97. The Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress, incorporated in 1969, is the only organization that systematically examines the American Presidency. The Center publishes *Presidential Studies Quarterly (PSQ)*, the only scholarly journal that focuses on the President of the United States. Since the publication of its first issue in 1974, *PSQ* became "an indispensable resource for understanding the US presidency." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* "offers articles, features, review essays, and book reviews covering the operations of the White House; presidential decision making; presidential relations with Congress, the courts, the bureaucracy, the public, and the press; and the President's involvement in public policy issues in both the domestic and international arenas." Retrieved on June 20, 2014 from [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1741-5705/homepage/ProductInformation.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1741-5705/homepage/ProductInformation.html). Other centers for the study of the presidency in the United States include: The Miller Center, a nonpartisan affiliate of the University of Virginia, Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies (Grand Valley State University), Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies (American University), The Peter S. Kalikow Center for the Study

Studies aim to enhance students' knowledge of "the institutions, procedures, and policies of the *American* national government." Unlike Political Science "which places equal emphasis upon political theory, *American* politics, and global politics," *Presidential Studies* "concentrate on *American* national politics and policy, focusing on how the chief executive influences, and in turn is influenced by, other institutions in the making of *American* national policy at home and abroad."⁹⁸ It is precisely the drive to better understand an aspect of the institution distinctive to the civilization of the United States and focal to the US political system—with the help of the concept borrowed from *Presidential Studies*—that ultimately provides the rationale for locating the present work in *American Studies*.⁹⁹

Up until recently, presidency research was "one of the last bastions of historical, nonquantitative research in American politics."¹⁰⁰ To view qualitative research on the presidency, however, as not fully scientific, reflects "a narrow, product-oriented notion of science."¹⁰¹ Building on the views of Karen M. Hult, Charles E. Walcott and Thomas Weko I follow a broader orientation that views science as "a self-reflexive process of open and systematic inquiry." In that spirit, I share their view that "how one undertakes inquiry is shaped most productively by one's research question(s), not by old-fashioned

of the American Presidency at Hofstra University, Center for Presidential Studies at Texas A&M University.

98. University of Central Arkansas, "Presidential Studies," retrieved on April 11, 2009 from <http://uca.edu/politicalscience/programs/presidential-studies/>, own emphases.

99. Scholars in Presidential Studies and American Studies alike often face the charge that their research "suffers in prestige due to its alleged underdevelopment as a 'scientific' field," and that it should be more theoretically sophisticated, rigorous and systematic. For more information, see:

Karen M. Hult, Charles E. Walcott and Thomas Weko, "Qualitative Research and the Study of the U. S. Presidency," *Congress and the Presidency* 26, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 133. The criticism of presidential studies in the '70s and '80s came from the presidency scholars themselves, who pressed for making the study more "quantitative and theoretical."

For more information, see Terry M. Moe, "The Revolution in Presidential Studies," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 39, no. 4 (December 2009): 701–24.

100. Gary King, "The Methodology of Presidential Research" in *Researching the Presidency*, ed. George C. Edwards III, John H. Hessel, and Bert Rockman (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), 388.

101. Hult, Walcott and Weko, "Qualitative Research and Study of the U. S. Presidency," 134.

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notions of ‘scientific methods’ ”¹⁰² The order of investigative procedure, as also applied to the present work, was fittingly captured by Joel M. Jones, who asserted that in *American Studies* research: “First comes the person, next the problem, then the process (the method) for seeking an understanding.”¹⁰³ “What American Studies has *distinctively* going for is its flexibility and its sensitivity to new and different problems. This means that for most people in American Studies formalized research scholarship is a by-product of their curiosity and receptivity to the world of ongoing experience.”¹⁰⁴ The present work is a by-product of precisely such understanding of *American Studies* research scholarship.

The present study examines the rhetorical dimension of the US presidency. My perspective is institutional. The institutional presidency, as Terry M. Moe reveals, is a term commonly used in reference to the White House, the Office of Management and Budget, and other elements of the Executive Office of the President, including the Council of Economic Advisers and the National Security Council. It may also refer to “patterned behaviors that link the presidency to other parts of the political system—policy-making routines, for example, that incorporate the cabinet and the permanent bureaucracy.”¹⁰⁵ By recognizing that the American presidency is an institution—an embodiment of the government—the researcher looks closely not merely at the President as an individual, but an aggregate of people who co-create the office, including White House units and agencies. She is predominantly concerned with the character of the presidency as the aggregate of people; their organization and complexity of their work.¹⁰⁶

The institution of the presidency is complex: large in size, with its parts performing specialized functions and a form of central authority that coor-

102. Ibid.

103. Joel M. Jones, “American Studies: The Myth of Methodology,” *American Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1979): 384.

104. Ibid.

105. Terry M. Moe, “The Politicized Presidency,” in *The Managerial Presidency*, ed. James P. Pfiffner (Austin, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 146.

106. John P. Burke, “The Institutional Presidency” in *The Presidency and the Political System 2nd ed.*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1987), 358.

dinates the parts' various contributions to the work of the institution. Over time, the size of the institutional presidency increased. Franklin D. Roosevelt aides became substituted, by the time of Reagan's presidency, with hundreds of aides and assistants with differentiated roles and increasingly specialized functions. Once simple tasks evolved into substantive duties that affect presidential policies. The institutional approach sees the presidency as an institution in which the central authority—the President—has “certain roles and responsibilities and is involved in numerous structures and processes ... [and] the structure, functions, and operations of the presidency become the center of attention.”¹⁰⁷ Although the central authority that coordinates the contributions of the institution's functional parts nominally resides in the President himself, since the Eisenhower presidency, coordinating authority may be transferred by the President on his chief of staff. Sherman Adams under Dwight D. Eisenhower or Ted Sorensen under JFK, both played substantive roles in policymaking.¹⁰⁸

The institutional approach is said to have some limitations, however. Institutional studies emphasize organizations and processes and describe, rather than explain them. Thus, more is known about the processes than about their consequences. Yet by studying the composition of the core presidential advisory resources during the SOTU process, the institutional approach helps understand how an incumbent organizes the Executive Office of the President, his personal White House Office staff, and how he utilizes his Cabinet. Most importantly, the institutional approach reveals how the power is shared by these different entities in the SOTU process and who, in the end, shapes US policies—presidential Cabinet, the permanent and “professionally competent staff” in the Executive Office of the President, or a President's personal staff of “partisan appointees” who owe their presence in the White House Office “to skill at partisan electoral or executive politics and close personal association with the president or his inner circle of advisers or both.”¹⁰⁹ As Terry M. Moe

107. George C. Edwards III, “Studying the Presidency” in *The Presidency and the Political System 2nd ed.*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1987), 31.

108. Burke, “The Institutional Presidency,” 360–61.

109. S. J. Colin Campbell, “The White House and Cabinet under the ‘Let's Deal’ Presidency”

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reminds us, the two important developments in the institutional presidency, and at the same time the two tools through which the Presidents seek control, included “the politicization of administrative arrangements and the centralization of policy-related concerns in the White House.”¹¹⁰ As the executive power is not explicitly defined in the US Constitution, chief executives have had “to earn their political authority and institutional autonomy,” in “a political system inhabited by other institutions vying for power and authority ... [b]y actively confronting existing institutional arrangements, redefining political understandings, and seizing upon any number of available resources.”¹¹¹ By increasing White House organizational competence through “greater size, division of labor, specialization, hierarchic coordination,” Presidents centralize the institutional presidency in the White House.¹¹² The increased White House control over policy initiatives was generally the practice throughout the period investigated in the present study.¹¹³ Presidents and their staff now routinely shape the national agenda.

The typical procedures by which the SOTU is produced include: solicitation of submissions for the SOTU, sifting of submissions by the White House staff, deciding on the direction of the SOTU, drafting (including editing and

in *The Bush Presidency. First Appraisals*, ed. S. J. Colin Campbell and Bert A. Rockman (New Jersey: Chatam House Publishers, Inc., 1991), 187. Campbell points out (p. 188) that since the Kennedy Administration, Presidents have preferred to rely on partisan rather than “more detached and analytic—professional advice.” The White House Office “gradually eclipsed the EOP as the core presidential advisory resource” and “the ascendancy of partisan appointees in the EOP itself has severely constricted the ability of professionally competent permanent officials to proffer advice once-removed from purely partisan considerations.”

110. Moe, “Politicized Presidency,” 144.

111. Daniel Galvin and Colleen Shogan, “Presidential Politicization and Centralization Across the Modern-Traditional Divide,” *Polity*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Apr., 2004), 479–80.

112. Moe, “The Politicized Presidency,” 151.

113. Following the political excesses of the Nixon Administration, Nixon’s two immediate successors—Ford and Carter—preferred to run the White House according to a “spokes-in-a-wheel approach,” where senior advisers enjoy “relatively autonomous control over separate domains” and “reported directly to the president without first resorting to the chief of staff.” This model was in practice from 1974 until the beginning of Ronald Reagan’s second term when the hierarchical features of the strong chief of staff were reintroduced. President Bush maintained the hierarchical structure for his White House Office. For more information on the design of the White House staff from Nixon to Bush see Campbell, “The White House and Cabinet under the ‘Let’s Deal’ Presidency,” 188–204.

redrafting), staffing the speech: distributing parts or the entire SOTU draft for comments and clearance by relevant Administration officials. Processes and procedures as well as the roles of the people who in the aggregate create the presidency are important and they may differ depending on the organization of the White House. While under one President (Kennedy), Counselor to the President may serve as both chief domestic policy advisor, chief speechwriter and coordinator of the SOTU process, under another President (Bush), the actual drafting may be handed to a speechwriter with little or no policy knowledge. Or, under one President policy-making may be more White House-oriented and under another more Cabinet-oriented. These arrangements may, in fact, have important implications for presidential policies and the way the President asserts himself in the policy-making process. By employing the institutional approach and integrating it with the concept of the Rhetorical Presidency, the present study aims to produce a fuller understanding of how the changes in the rhetorical dimension of the presidency initiated by Woodrow Wilson may have affected the routine processes and procedures by which the SOTU is produced.¹¹⁴

In supporting the arguments advanced in this study, I rely on the qualitative documentary research method, which involved the identification, collection, and subsequent textual analysis of documents as primary source materials. The documents under investigation are deposited in the presidential libraries in the United States, and include: Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, KS; John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, MA; Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX; Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, MI; and, George Bush Presidential Library, College Station, TX. My general criterion and approach that guided the collection of materials in each Presidential Library was always the same: access and retrieve folders with documentation pertaining to the State of the Union,

114. Jeffrey E. Cohen, "Alternative Features: Comment on Terry Moe's 'The Revolution in Presidential Studies.'" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 39, Issue 4 (December 2009): 725–35. Cohen, p. 727, points out that "We need to integrate our concepts and research on the public presidency with the concepts and research on the institutional presidency to produce a fuller and more complete understanding of the presidency."

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including SOTU drafts, departmental and agency submissions, memoranda, minutes, reports, or any other communications pertaining to the SOTU.

How, methodologically speaking, did I make sense and found meaning in the raw data? With respect to the idea of using primary documents as source material, the work of Charles J. G. Griffin has been particularly influential on my study. Griffin's analysis of Eisenhower's 1954 State of the Union was as a case study in presidential speechwriting. His work gives insight into what he called "the speech writing infrastructure," that is "the people and procedures which were responsible for coordinating Eisenhower's words and actions."¹¹⁵ Griffin called attention to the fact that presidential rhetorical skills are evaluated largely based on the rhetorical analysis of major addresses, while the speechwriting infrastructure is largely ignored and less well understood.¹¹⁶ The process of producing presidential SOTUS, however, deserves the closest and most thorough examination as it extends our understanding of how the presidency is organized and how it functions. It illustrates how the President's success is shaped by his own and his staff's effort. In addition, it helps to understand how long and complicated a task the SOTU process can be, and that good planning and a skilful, disciplined and organized speechwriter can spare a President a great deal of stress. Griffin's historical narrative of the composition of Eisenhower's Address provides a foundation for discussing the relationship between speechwriting and policy making; an important

115. Charles J. G. Griffin, "Dwight D. Eisenhower. The 1954 State of the Union Address as a Case Study in Presidential Speechwriting," in *Presidential Speechwriting: from the New Deal to the Reagan revolution and beyond*, ed. Kurt Ritter and Martin J. Medhurst (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 68.

116. This observation made by Griffin referred specifically to studies on President Eisenhower, but it can be extended to other Presidents examined in the present study. Systematic studies on the State of the Union speechwriting infrastructure are virtually non-existent. For the evaluations of presidential rhetorical skills see, for instance, Roderic P. Hart, *Verbal Style and the Presidency: A Computer-Based Analysis* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), Halford Ryan, ed., *U. S. Presidents as orators: a bio-critical sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995). Without the analysis of the speechwriting infrastructure during the SOTU process in particular, a researcher can generalize either about the content or the delivery of the SOTU; however, one does not get an insight into the decision-making process that precedes the actual drafting, she does not know, if the President gives any thought to the SOTU Address that defines his legislative leadership, and how the power to affect policies is shared between the White House and the Cabinet.

relationship affected by the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency. The historical narrative of the composition of the SOTU under Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford and Bush is interwoven with the recollections of the Presidents and their closest advisers and speechwriters, references to historical context in which the SOTU was set, and biographical information. By subjecting primary sources to textual analysis, providing necessary historical context and filling the gaps in the narrative with insights derived from the studies on the individual presidencies, I was able to arrive at findings concerning the organization of work and staff resources as well as presidential involvement. This approach to communication merges speechwriting and policy-formation activities.

Having identified and collected the relevant primary sources, I subjected them to a textual analysis. The immersion in the raw data: reading documents and transcripts, meeting minutes, letters and memoranda, studying notes, departmental reports, and drafts of speeches enabled me to identify the people and institutions, and the recurrent patterns of work involved in the process of drafting the SOTUS and preparing the five selected Presidents for their presentation to Congress. In taking this approach, I attempted to understand, analyze and draw conclusions about whether and how the Rhetorical Presidency may have influenced the crafting and the presentation of the State of the Unions. As historical artifacts, documents reveal intentions and thoughts of those who contribute to the production of the SOTU. They give insights to the processes, the organization of work, the individuals involved in the process; they show the tensions, the difficulties, the conflicting ideas that compete for approval and acceptance. These insights enable us to understand that the President's speech is not a product of some anonymous forces but real people, the Presidents' men and women who share in the successes and failures of the presidency. The unavoidably incomplete accounts are filled up with secondary sources wherever possible.

Based on the findings extracted from the analysis of primary sources relating to the State of the Union Addresses under Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush, the present work provides evidence that the State of the Union

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Address may be the genre of presidential rhetoric that remains largely unaffected by most of the negative consequences associated with rise of the Rhetorical Presidency by Jeffrey Tulis and other scholars of the presidency, whose views are presented in this work.

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER 1, “STUCK WITH IT!” SOME CONSTRAINTS IN DRAFTING THE STATE OF THE UNIONS attracts attention to the challenge of reconciling the demand for speaking with the challenge of composing the SOTU of the incoming and outgoing Presidents. The process that results in a State of the Union is always labor intensive and beset with numerous challenges. With the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency, the expectation to provide rhetorical leadership regardless of the circumstances concomitant with the progression of presidential term can make the process particularly tough for the incoming presidents and for outgoing presidents—also futile. Those constraints are only some of the factors that contribute to the toughest season in the White House. The purpose of CHAPTER 2, “A FRIGHTENING ASSIGNMENT”: SPEECHWRITING FROM DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER TO GEORGE H. W. BUSH is to reconstruct the processes that lead to the SOTU Address and discuss the speechwriting operations under Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush. The aim of this chapter is to examine who generates policy input for the State of the Union Addresses and the role of key presidential speechwriters, and how well these individuals were linked to the White House policy processes. CHAPTER 3, “THE WORK HE CANNOT ESCAPE” examines the President’s role in the SOTU preparatory process. Although the modern Presidents made use of speechwriters, it was often out of the lack of time or lack of choice than the lack of abilities to write speeches by the Presidents. The chapter illustrates that the growth of the speechwriting staff did not lift the burden of producing the Address off the President’s shoulders. Although with different intensity, each President under study would be involved in the preparatory process by making decisions,

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developing ideas, holding meetings, and even editing and drafting parts of the speech. With an eye on the processes of preparation of the Presidents for the presentation of the State of the Union, CHAPTER 4, VISUAL LEADERSHIP: BEYOND WORDS, BEYOND GOING PUBLIC demonstrates how the stress on visible aspects of a presidential speech in particular, associated with the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency affected: the audience of the SOTU, the process of preparing the President for speechmaking, and presidential-congressional relations. The chapter asks specifically, how Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford and Bush sought to appear on television, what were the goals presidential advisers sought to achieve by going through the arduous process of preparation and advance planning. How, in the final analysis, presidential speechmaking contributes to the toughest season in the White House.

CHAPTER ONE

STUCK WITH IT! SOME CONSTRAINTS IN DRAFTING THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESSES

THE LIMITATIONS OF A PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION: STATE OF THE UNIONS OF THE INCOMING PRESIDENTS

“You campaign in poetry, you govern in prose,” probably nowhere else is the wisdom of that famous dictum tested better than during a transition period. While the poetry of campaigning can be lofty and vague, the prose of governing forces the President to be specific. Because of the centrality of the Presidency in American political system, the President is expected to serve as “the chief source of fact and explanation and opinion.”¹ The early period of the presidency is particularly important for getting the attention of the public and informing Congress about the Administration’s priorities. As the chief legislator, the President is expected to take positions on issues and convey policy substance in his SOTU.² Rhetorical Presidency nowadays

1. Memo, Douglass Cater to the President, December 26, 1964. Folder: Cater, Douglass: Memos to the President, November, 1964–February 1965. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson 1963–1969, Files of Douglass Cater. Box 13. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

2. *Ibid.*, 102. The impact of the legislation proposed in the State of the Union on the aggregate of the annual legislation is usually small. The higher rate of legislative victories does not immediately translate into more success. Bond and Fleisher in Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, *The President in the Legislative Arena* (Chicago: The University of Chicago

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routinely commits the Chief Executives to speaking despite the fact that they may lack the necessary knowledge to provide (legislative) leadership. The President-elect is expected to deliver his first State of the Union Address just less than three months after the general election and only within a couple of

Press, 1990), 54, suggest that the success depends on one's values. Presidents with lower legislative rate may still have managed to win on more important issues than Presidents with higher legislative rate. Thus a legislative victory may not be counted as a legislative success. Because of this subjective value judgments that are used by both parties in evaluating president's legislative abilities, Bond and Fleisher (p. 55) agree that "no empirical indicator is completely satisfactory." One "appealing measure of success," is the presidential box score that indicates the percentage of presidential proposals approved by Congress. The best known and most used presidential box score is the one reported annually by *Congressional Quarterly* from 1954 to 1975, thus encompassing almost the entire period under study here. A virtue of using the box score in this study is that the proposal made by the President is traced back to the source in which the President announced that proposal. Therefore, it is relatively easy to trace which proposal originated with the State of the Union in a given year and how effective the State of the Union was that year in terms of being a source of the President's approved program and also, what proportion of the approved program, enacted into law, can be attributed to the State of the Union. For Eisenhower's 1953 box score see: *Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 83rd Congress 2nd session 1954*, vol. X. Sterling T. Evans Library, Texas A&M University. Eisenhower recommended 13 proposals in his first SOTU. Eight proposals laid out in Eisenhower's SOTU of 1953 that received favorable action in Congress constituted 61.5 percent of all proposals submitted in 1953 SOTU and 29.5 percent of all 44 proposals submitted by Eisenhower to the first session of Congress. Nine out thirteen proposals recommended by Eisenhower in the SOTU were also discussed at Conference with Congress leaders. The four proposals that were recommended exclusively in the State of the Union of 1953 concerned the authorization of factory inspections by Food and Drug Administration, proposal to join in the resolution of non-recognition of Soviet enslavement of peoples (ER), amendment of Immigration Act (IA), and proposal for self-government for DC (SG). Of those four, one was not acted upon (IA), one was rejected (ER) and one received partial action (SG). Thus the only success of Eisenhower's 1953 SOTU was the authorization of factory inspections by Food and Drug Administration. In 1961 President Kennedy was granted with 48.4 percent, or 172 of 355, of his legislative requests. Three specific requests originated with his first State of the Union. And these were: a request for amending the 1951 Mutual Defense Assistance Act (Battle Act) to revise the eligibility requirement for assistance to Poland and possibly other Communist-dominated areas when such action might have been in the nation's best interest, (MDDA); a request for appropriation in full the \$500 million fund pledged by the Act of Bogota (AB); and a request to consent to ratification of convention establishing the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Senate would take favorable action on all of these proposals; AB would become a public law, Senate approved the ratification of the convention establishing OECD and approved US membership in the OECD. The House, however, failed to act upon the MDDA.

weeks after the inauguration³ The task so immense as charting a new course for the nation in the State of the Union in the first weeks of the presidency may prove particularly tough for the incumbent, his speechwriters and the Administration, and for good reasons.

Presidential Records leave the White House with the outgoing President and the incoming President has no files from the previous Administration to learn from. The amount of information available to the incoming team “depends on the preparations provided for by the incumbent White House and the cooperation of the department secretaries and their deputies.”⁴ Without the “institutional memory” and resources, each President-elect must begin literally from scratch.⁵ The traditional understanding of the role of the State of the Union Address is that it is “a communication tool of the chief legislator.”⁶ The preparations for the first, inaugural SOTU, often take place already during the transition period and under maximum pressures of time. President-elects must cope with the customary scheduling of the Address and work with limited resources and information. Most importantly, however, a President-elect himself lacks the constitutional authority and the necessary knowledge to make decisions that will shape his Administration’s actions and determine the executive-legislative discourse for the rest of his term in office.

President Eisenhower was very much against the idea of presenting the annual Address to Congress in 1953. Eisenhower held a rather traditional understanding of the separation of powers concept, where Congress is the legislation-making organ.⁷ It was suggested that the President’s 1953 State of

3. By tradition, the President delivers the SOTU annually near the beginning of a new congressional session. Between 1934 (FDR) and 2014 (Obama) the date has been as early as January 3 and as late as February 24.

4. Martha Joynt Kumar, “Getting Ready for Day One: Taking Advantage of the Opportunities and Minimizing the Hazards of a Presidential Transition,” retrieved on November 8, 2010 from <http://whitehousetransitionproject.org/resources/briefing/PAR2009/kumar.pdf>, 604.

5. Ibid.

6. Donna R. Hoffman and Alison D. Howard, *Addressing the State of the Union: The Evolution and Impact of the President’s Big Speech* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2006), 97.

7. Stephen J. Wayne, *The Legislative Presidency* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 105. Freie Universität Berlin; John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies.

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the Union Address may thus include a passage dealing with his philosophy of government, its spiritual basis, and an emphasis on restoring a proper working relationship between the Executive Branch and Congress.⁸ President Eisenhower also seems to have been well aware that his SOTU was only an opening salvo in the legislative process. Writing to his brother, the President pledged that once the Administration took their “stand on that program and specified in it those measures on which priority action is mandatory, then, of course, all of us, with me in the lead, will constantly pound the drums for the necessary legislation.” By saying “all kinds of conferences, arguments, speeches and other forms of persuasive action will have to be taken, both clandestinely and publicly, to implement the program,” Eisenhower knew that no single speech could be so powerful to guarantee the realization of the President’s program, or enough to present it. Rather, he would use any opportunity to fight for his program. As the President indicated, his SOTUS as such were not blueprints for congressional action, and he would discuss recommended programs only in general terms. It would be his Budget Message, the Economic Report and Special Messages that would “set forth in detail major programs.”⁹

Despite Eisenhower’s intention to propose to the attention of the Congress a more comprehensive program for the country, he also knew that he would need more time for “the preparation of a detailed and comprehensive program of recommended action to cover all phases of the responsibilities that devolve upon our country’s new leaders.” Therefore, he decided to provide “only a sure and substantial beginning,” and suggest in this first message to Congress “certain lines along which our joint efforts may immediately be directed toward realization of these four ruling purposes.” The President’s program and recommendations were to be submitted to Congress only after an appropriate period of study.¹⁰ Eisenhower would make the following note in his diary:

8. Check list for State of the Union Message. Folder: Outline and Drafts [S. O. U 1953] Harlow Records, Box 9. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

9. Note, Maxwell M. Rabb to the Cabinet, January 2, 1955. State of the Union—1955—Cabinet Draft (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

10. In his first SOTU to the first session of the 83rd Congress, the President nevertheless

Today I give my first “State of the Union” talk before a Joint Session of the Congress. I feel it a mistake for a new Administration to be talking so soon after inauguration; basic principles, expanded in an inaugural talk are one thing—but to begin talking concretely about a great array of specific problems is quite another. Time for study, exploration, and analysis is necessary.¹¹

Since the State of the Union Address is usually the product of several months of efforts of both the President and the Federal bureaucracy, Eisenhower thought that the Address “might not have enough to it to warrant bringing Congress into a joint session to hear him.”¹² Therefore, as a presidential speechwriter Bryce N. Harlow noted, Eisenhower’s 1953 SOTU was in effect “his Inaugural Address, more than anything else.”¹³ The implications of the arrival of the new Administration whose “life was measured in hours and days rather than in months and years,” as President Eisenhower understood them had been that:

In these circumstances, the logical purpose of an Administration ... was to present a general statement in the several categories of governmental responsibility, including the description of purposes, objectives, and basic approach of the new Administration. Some analysis of inherited problems and situations was possible and was presented in my ... message. Where there existed obvious need for legislation, suitable recommendations were included, but in the larger sense there was a clear need for study, evaluation, and the proper organization of appropriate conclusions before a

sought Congressional action on 13 various policy proposals in a range of areas, including: education and welfare, foreign policy, labor, and other miscellaneous and administrative areas, as well as taxes and economic policy areas.

11. Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Diary, 2 February 1953” in *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, doc. 14, ed. Louis Galambos and Daun van Ee, doc. 14, WWW facsimile by The Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission of the print edition; Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, retrieved on April 5, 2009 from <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/first-term/documents/14.cfm>.

12. Memo, Arthur S. Flemming to Bryce Harlow, December 17, 1954. Folder: Departmental Comments and Suggestions, State of Union 1955 (2); Harlow Records, Box 13. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

13. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967:
140. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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complete program representing the specific convictions of the Administration could be presented to this Congress.¹⁴

Thus out of necessity, Eisenhower's first SOTU was "largely an expression of basic viewpoints and broad objectives rather than the exposition of a detailed, comprehensive program."¹⁵ Like as not, the President was aware of the demands of the modern presidency and decided to deliver the SOTU in person. His serious approach to fulfilling that duty and a brief transition time caused him not to act in haste, in spite of the approaching deadline. The limitations of a transitional period faced by the young Eisenhower Administration were that:

The Executive Department, headed by the President and the new majority in the Congress, though legally responsible, under our system, for developing a legislative program that would reflect the 1952 decision in the National election, were far too deeply conscious of the need for logical decisions, based upon fact and statistic rather than upon partisanship and prejudice, to act with reckless haste.¹⁶

JFK was only the second incoming President to face the choice of presenting his State of the Union after the recent presentation of the SOTU by the outgoing President Eisenhower.¹⁷ Like Eisenhower before him, JFK had little time to study and formulate programs. Kennedy's staff started to plan the program

14. Memo, Dwight David Eisenhower to Bryce Harlow, December 3, 1953. Folder: Draft #2, 12/1/53. State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

15. Draft #1, President's edits, December 16, 1953. Folder: Drafts—State of the Union, December 1953 (10), Harlow Records, Box 10. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

16. Draft #2, 12/1/53. President's dictation. State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

17. Until President Eisenhower's 1953 SOTU, only an outgoing President presented his SOTU. A newly inaugurated President would wait a year to present his first SOTU. Eisenhower's message was a written document, transmitted to the House of Representatives on January 12. As the Senate was not in session that day, it was transmitted the following day, January 13. Eisenhower's "farewell" SOTU in 1961 did not include legislative proposals.

already after the election victory and during the transition period. The man who apparently “never opened his mouth unless he had something to say ... some useful purpose to accomplish,” delivered his State of the Union Address just ten days after his inauguration.¹⁸ Kennedy knew how limited were his remarks. He did not want to wait a year, however, to present his substantive legislative agenda. But he too would rather “spell out” his proposals “in the series of messages” that the Administration was going to send in the course of fourteen days following the Address.¹⁹ Neither would Kennedy’s first SOTU provide details about how his programs would be financed. In his first State of the Union, the President stated:

But today, were I to offer—after little more than a week in office—detailed legislation to remedy every national ill, the Congress would rightly wonder whether the desire for speed had replaced the duty of responsibility. My remarks, therefore, will be limited. But they will also be candid. To state the facts frankly is not to despair the future nor indict the past. The prudent heir takes careful inventory of his legacies, and gives a faithful accounting to those whom he owes an obligation of trust. And, while the occasion does not call for another recital of our blessings and assets, we do have no greater asset than the willingness of a free and determined people, through its elected officials, to face all problems frankly and meet all dangers free from panic or fear.²⁰

Kennedy acted like the Rhetorical President who uses public speaking as an instrument of power and presented the Address on the nation’s condition in the customary timeframe based on what he knew at the time. Following his Address, however, the President was criticized for deliberately painting too dark a picture of the nation’s condition, so that he could have taken credit, had there been any improvement. Kennedy disagreed. The President pointed out

18. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964: 96–97, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

19. Harold W. Chase and Allen H. Lehman, ed., *Kennedy and the Press. The News Conferences* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 12.

20. John F. Kennedy, “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 30, 1961. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project, retrieved on July 10, 2011 from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8045>.

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that “in some areas involving the national interest the news would be worse before it gets better,” and that, to the best of his ability, was “an accurate presentation.”²¹

The transition process enables the President-elect to switch from campaigning to governing, which involves staffing the Administration with people appropriate for management responsibilities. But the brief time span that separates the inauguration from the presentation of the State of the Union Address, may not allow the heads of major departments to familiarize themselves with the exigencies and details of the departments’ operation and activities, and provide the President with information and evaluations that are crucial in the process of formulating the President’s legislative agenda for Congress and composing the SOTU. Already in the Eisenhower period, the SOTU was considered “the most political document of the year.”²² As the President’s speechwriter pointed out, Eisenhower’s 1954 SOTU was “the first step up to bat of all of his new Cabinet officers, with their programs, looking not just to the year ahead but project over the years ahead.”²³ That put an extremely difficult demand on the time available for the particular message. This is true of every Administration when they prepare their first program message. Time concerns and the amount of work that goes into the preparation of this assignment encouraged early planning. Already when Eisenhower assembled the group of people who would act as his principal advisers in government, the general intention of his Administration was to use 1953 as “a period of study and formulation of programs. We have always felt,” he wrote to his brother Milton, “that the ‘Administration Bible’ would be brought out for publication in the delivery of the 1954 Message to the Congress.”²⁴ The President eventually changed his mind for, as he admitted

21. Harold W. Chase and Allen H. Lehman, ed., *Kennedy and the Press. The News Conferences* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 12.

22. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967, 96. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

23. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

24. Memo, Dwight David Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, November 6, 1953. Folder: State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States,

in his Diary, “the Republicans have been so long out of power they want—and probably need—a pronouncement from their President, as a starting point. This I shall try to give. I hope—and pray—that it does not contain blunders that we will later regret.”²⁵ Although, as the President noted, the outline made “no attempt to be comprehensive in the statements of topics to be included in the Message,” he wanted to “point out that we do want to make it a very thoughtful and comprehensive program—one that will continue our platform on which we will take a battling stand.”²⁶ The President’s intention was to produce a substantial address, which would summarize planning in each department and state the principles of governmental responsibility.

White House memoranda on the State of the Union from the members of the Kennedy Cabinet reveal that in the short time available for providing the White House with departmental submissions, the Secretary of Commerce admitted that he was not able to do more than just “stress the need to rejuvenate the activities of his department.”²⁷ Similarly, in writing to Ted Sorensen, Abraham Ribicoff, who succeeded Arthur S. Flemming as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, recognized that challenge given that, as he put it, “*words actually mean decisions.*” Ribicoff pointed out that there was not sufficient time for him personally “to weigh as carefully as I would like all the details and alternatives” that he presented in his communications with Sorensen, and therefore, they did not represent his final judgment.²⁸ Assistant Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Wilbur J. Cohen was to proceed immediately to reexamine the key elements of the proposals, which were submitted to Sorensen. Others less urgent were to be submitted by the department to the current session of the Congress.²⁹ This hesitation as to

Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

25. Eisenhower, “Diary, 2 February 1953”, doc. 14.

26. Ibid.

27. Memo, “Programs Emphasis for State of the Union,” January 19, 1961. Papers of John Kenneth Galbraith, White House Files 1961, State of the Union Address, memorandums 1/12/61–1/9/61, Box 76. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

28. Memo, Abraham Ribicoff to Theodore Sorensen, January 23, 1961. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961–63, Box 63. Folder: State of the Union Message I 1/30/61 Health, Education + Welfare memoranda 1/23/61. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

29. Memo to Theodore Sorensen, January 23, 1961. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK

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recommending proposals or changes in departments without having first understood the status of programs and alternatives was typical of the people who came to work with JFK.³⁰

Kennedy's '61 SOTU vividly illustrates the consequences of acting under maximum time pressures and with limited information. The limited time available to the new Administration prior to the delivery of the SOTU is an indication of a challenge that posits itself to the new President and his Administration to compress the efforts that in other years may extend several months back. Under Sorensen, deadlines for departmental submissions were exceptionally short. On January 23, only one week before Kennedy delivered his SOTU, following the conference that he held with heads of government departments the same day, Sorensen would send memoranda to major departments requesting input for the President's State of the Union.³¹ As the pressures of time were immense, Sorensen allowed no more than three days for providing submissions. At the same time he set quite high expectations as to what he wanted in the President's SOTU. For instance, in an effort to obtain first-hand information on the activities of the Department of State, Sorensen requested Secretary of State Dean Rusk to submit language on the America's relations with the world and the crises it inherited. He specifically wanted that the Department made it clear that additional trouble and crises should have been expected and that their draft pointed out that the Kennedy Administration was not behind those problems. The inventory, Sorensen noted, should

Speech Files 1961–63, Box 63. Folder: State of the Union Message I 1/30/61 Health, Education + Welfare memorandums 1/32/61. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

30. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964: 11, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program. For example, before Robert S. McNamara accepted the President's nomination for the Secretary of Defense, he and the President had come to an agreement that McNamara would make his own selection, subject to the President's approval, of the team he wanted to work within the Department of Defense. McNamara would not be expected to present a major reorganization of the Department of Defense, "at least for the first year, until he himself had examined the situation to see whether he thought one was necessary." Only after they made such an agreement, McNamara accepted the President's offer to become his Secretary of Defense.

31. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to Robert S. McNamara, January 23, 1961. Folder: State of the Union message I 1/30/61 memorandums 12/28/66–1/23/61 + undated. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961–63. Box 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

be on an area-by-area basis, state the problem in each area and the Administration's objectives. Robert McNamara was asked for a complete reappraisal of the Defense establishment.³² No specific solutions to these problems were expected at this point.³³ As the deadline for presenting Kennedy's SOTU was approaching, however, Sorensen's correspondence with secretaries stressed "terseness" of submissions and requested their cooperation by concentrating on essentials in submitting ideas for Kennedy's SOTU.³⁴

Given the circumstances, creating the content of the first SOTU is no small accomplishment. The three of Bush's predecessors: Presidents Nixon, Carter and Reagan chose not to deliver the SOTU at all right after the inauguration. Reagan, however, gave the traditional SOTU in 1985 in the beginning of his second term. The last State of the Union delivered by an incoming President was LBJ's 1965 SOTU. And the last SOTU delivered by an incoming President, when there was a change in Presidents, was Kennedy's 1961 SOTU. President Reagan's announcement that his 1988 SOTU was his last, created an option for President George H. W. Bush. Bush's first SOTU-like address, however, ended up being just a ceremonial speech. The newly elected President had only recently taken the oath of office and delivered his traditional Inaugural Address. The new Administration was in the process of transition at the time when the White House normally requests submissions from the government departments and agencies for the State of the Union. As late as mid-December there was still no agreement as to whether President-elect Bush would be giving the State of the Union Address at all.

Not knowing what the President intended to say in that speech, Curt Smith who joined Bush's speechwriting stable in 1989, submitted his ideas for the speech with a brief speech draft to Bob Grady, the speechwriter

32. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to Robert S. McNamara, January 23, 1961. Folder: State of the Union message I 1/30/61 Memoranda 12/28/66-1/23/61 + undated. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961-63. Box 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

33. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to Dean Rusk, January 23, 1961. Folder: State of the Union message I 1/30/61 Memoranda 12/28/66-1/23/61 + undated. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961-63. Box 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

34. Letter, Stewart L. Udall to Theodore Sorensen, January 18, 1961. Folder: State of the Union message I 1/30/61 memorandums 12/28/66-1/23/61 + undated. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961-63. Box 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

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assigned to the task of drafting this address, as late as January 31.³⁵ Smith's suggestions included inter alia passages on the economy and the goals of the Bush Administration, which reflected the expectations of the electorate, such as: curbing federal regulations, reducing federal spending and America that acknowledges the limits of its power abroad. He also suggested paragraphs on specific items, including child care, education, the environment, and civil rights. Smith's draft, however, did not outline any concrete policy proposals. Rather, it was the statement of principles, which were at the root of presidential solutions to such issues as education, childcare and others. President Bush announced in the Address that he wanted to be the Education President and called upon Congress to join him in his effort to reward America's best schools and teachers, and the establishment of a new program of National Science Scholars. The newly inaugurated President could offer Congress little more than a ceremonial speech expressing the promise of cooperation with the legislative branch.

The tendency to stress principles and promises over specific programs had a significant justification in the budget. Director of the Bureau of the Budget under Eisenhower, Joseph M. Dodge, wanted that the President's first SOTU specifically emphasized that the Government Budget for the Fiscal Year 1954 (July 1, 1953–June 30, 1954) was completely developed by the outgoing Administration and that the designees for official positions in the incoming Administration have not participated in determining the programs and policies on which the Budget was based. Besides inheriting the budget for the fiscal year 1954, the incoming Administration would inherit the accumulated and unfulfilled obligations arising from appropriation legislation enacted in prior years. The first Budget of the Eisenhower Administration would be for the FY 1955, taking effect July 1, 1954 and submitted in January 1954. Preparation for that Budget would begin in early 1953. Every Government Budget was the result of nearly a year of work in the multiple and diverse Departments

35. Memo, Curt Smith to Bob Grady, "February 9 Speech," January 31, 1989. Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File Drafts. Folder: Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 [OA 2771] [3], Box 2. George Bush Presidential Library.

and Agencies by many persons at all levels of responsibility.³⁶ To deal with an inherited national debt, obligations and deficits would not be easy and the President admitted it in the Address. All he could do was only to pledge to commit all his efforts to correct this situation by taking appropriate steps towards the elimination of the annual deficit, balancing the budget, and preventing further inflation. Because the President is expected to give the State of the Union at the opening of each congressional session, he knows he has a deadline to meet. There is not enough time to deal effectively with all the problems before the deadline approaches.

A LAME-DUCK EFFORT? THE PRO-FORMA, OR FAREWELL SOTUS

Since Harry Truman up until Ronald Reagan, all outgoing Presidents delivered the State of the Union Address. After President Lyndon Baines Johnson delivered not only his State of the Union Address, his Budget Message and Economic Report one after another in January 1969, the newly inaugurated President Nixon decided not to give his first State of the Union Address in 1969. Nor did the incoming President Carter deliver his first SOTU in 1977 after the outgoing President Ford delivered his farewell State of the Union Address. Instead, Carter confined himself to a Message of Budget Revisions in February 1977. Nor did President Reagan deliver a traditional State of the Union in 1981. Instead, Reagan delivered a short televised report on the state of the economy on February 5 and on February 17 an Address to the Joint Session of Congress on Economic Recovery Program. President George H. W. Bush did not issue a SOTU at the end of his term in 1993.

Before the Twentieth Amendment was ratified in 1933, President spoke to a retiring Congress, while the new Congress was still months before assembling. Truman's last State of the Union of January 7, 1953, was read by clerks of the Houses, but it left the following legacy:

On previous occasions, it has been my custom to set forth proposals

³⁶ Joseph M. Dodge statement on Budget. Folder: Budget and Fiscal Policy [S. O. U. 1953], Harlow Records, Box 9. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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for legislative action in the coming year. But that is not my purpose today. The presentation of a legislative program falls properly to my successor, not to me, and I would not infringe upon his responsibility to chart the forward course. Instead, I wish to speak of the course we have been following the past eight years and the position at which we have arrived.

Already under President Eisenhower, some discussions had been made of a constitutional re-arrangement of this schedule as it created an absurd situation in which the defeated or the outgoing President submits documents that are not relevant. In addition, the timing of the President's last SOTU coincides with the electoral campaign, which Eisenhower's speechwriter Harlow considered "unfortunate."³⁷ As he argued,

... the pressures attendant upon these basic papers of the Presidency are immense, and they can't be deferred. There are deadlines. Then, of course, you're raising the parallel problem of a newly elected President, the outgoing President still having to prepare these documents—an exercise, essentially, in futility, with a new President elected waiting in the wings to devise his own programs. But without authority under the Constitution to proceed. And so the outgoing President prepares a State of the Union Message and he prepares a Budget Message and an Economic Report, as if they were relevant.³⁸

Since, in general, the SOTUs of outgoing Presidents are not blueprints for congressional action, I refer to them as pro-forma State of the Unions. There is some evidence that already President Eisenhower considered his 1960 Address his last SOTU.³⁹ Eisenhower's speechwriter Ralph Williams suggested,

37. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967: 102. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Eisenhower predicted that the 1960 SOTU would be his last personally delivered State of the Union: "Since I at least am of the firm opinion that the 1960 State of the Union was my last such message (I understand my impression is disputed by some of the people who have been around here longer than I), you are perfectly safe in your praise of the talk." Dwight Eisenhower to B. G. Byars, January 8, 1960. Folder: 20-X-175 State of the Union January 7, 1959. Central Files, President's Personal File, PPF, Box 662. Con (2). Dwight D. Eisenhower

however, that it was possible that the President would give “a short ‘leave taking’ speech in lieu of the customary State of the Union message,” which in Williams’ understanding had no applicability in 1961.⁴⁰ As the final weeks of the Eisenhower Administration wore on, there was a sense that the State of the Union would be “sort of a lame duck effort in any event.”⁴¹ The final State of the Union was produced, however, and most likely Ralph Williams had a hand in it.⁴² Aware of his constitutional duty to assess the State of the Union, the President noted in the Address that in the past years his goal was to outline “a forward course designed to achieve our mutual objective—a better America in a world of peace.” The function of his final SOTU was “credit claiming.”⁴³ In Eisenhower’s opinion, it was the new President, who would shortly lay before the American people “his proposals to shape the future of our great land.” For his part, Eisenhower had two purposes: first, he wanted to express his appreciation of the Congress, the American people and those in the Congress of both parties who supported the President’s programs in the interest of their country and thank his associates in the Executive Branch, who implemented diverse government programs. Eisenhower’s second purpose was “to review briefly the record of these past eight years in the hope that, out of the sum of these experiences, lessons will emerge that are useful to our Nation.”⁴⁴ At some point during the State of the Union preparations, the process yielded up the farewell SOTU. President Eisenhower’s 1961 SOTU was

Presidential Library.

40. Letter, Ralph E. Williams Jr. to H. L. Spencer, December 15, 1960. Folder: Chronological (1). Williams Ralph E.: Papers, 1958–60. Box 1. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

41. Eisenhower Library Oral History Project, “OH-503 interview with Captain Ralph Williams by James Leyerzapf, 1988”, 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Retrieved on November 14, 2007 from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/oral_histories/oral_history_transcripts/Williams_Ralph_503.pdf

42. Ibid.

43. “Credit claiming,” as Hoffman and Howard argue, “is not confined to just legislative accomplishments.” See Hoffman and Howard, *Addressing the State of the Union: The Evolution and Impact of the President’s Big Speech*, 100.

44. Dwight D. Eisenhower: “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union,” January 12, 1961. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, retrieved on January 6, 2008 from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12074>.

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a written document, transmitted to the House of Representatives and read by a clerk.

Similarly, efforts to produce the final SOTU under Presidents Johnson and Ford yielded up their farewell addresses too. President Johnson and Ford presented status reports on the achievements of their Administrations, but they also used that opportunity to set the tone for their parties. President Johnson did so, in fact, by presenting a broad legislative program. As Johnson's case illustrates, the composition of the SOTU delivered by an outgoing President may require as much work as in other years, despite the fact that in legislative terms, it is an exercise in futility. As LBJ's tenure was about to come to a close, McPherson reminded the President that only two Presidents before him, Truman and Eisenhower, "faced exactly the options before you now as you consider the form, purpose, and manner of presenting your final message on the State of the Union."⁴⁵ Unlike Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson delivered his speech personally on January 14, 1969, in lieu of a traditional Farewell Address. Although the President chose not to seek another term and announced that decision in a nationally televised address on March 31, 1968, judging by the way the President's staff went about the preparation of the 1969 SOTU, it seems that they did not intend to produce an address markedly different from Johnson's previous State of the Unions. As early as June 10, 1968, Johnson's National Security Adviser Walt Rostow would stimulate some initial thinking on the President's 1969 SOTU. Joe Califano, who was charged with coordinating the SOTU efforts on domestic policy portions of the SOTU, started to solicit material for the speech in a manner that did not differ from the already established routine. Between late August and early September 1968, Califano asked several people to submit by October 7, 1968 "a detailed outline of new initiatives which might be proposed in the Budge Economic and State of the Union Messages."⁴⁶ Califano requested

45. Memo, Harry McPherson to the President, December 9, 1968. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

46. *Ibid.*

that the outline covered actions which might have been taken in relation to the State of the Union Address and which would deal with the various problems in several specific fields, including District of Columbia Affairs, Marine Sciences, Consumer Protection, selective service, servicemen and veterans, nutrition and adequate diets.⁴⁷ In response to his request, ideas for the inclusion in the State of the Union started to follow in early September. Concrete recommendations concerning the Budget, the Economic and the State of the Union Address were submitted from several departments.⁴⁸

A tentative agreement on the shape of the State of the Union Message and the televised address to the Nation had been reached around mid-December 1968. The meeting with the group including Joe Califano, Jim Gaither, Larry Levinson, Matt Nimetz, Art Okun, DeVier Pierson, Walt Rostow, Charlie Zwieck was planned to discuss the following “ingredients” of the speech:

1. The current state of the economy; foreign relations, administration’s efforts in education, health, jobs, civil rights, anti-pollution, and conservation;
2. The basic philosophy expressed as simply and pithily as possible that the Administration had pursued in attempting to meet our responsibilities in each field;
3. The commitments Congress had undertaken in these past few years,

47. Joseph A. Califano to Matthew Nimetz. Folder: office files of Joseph Califano. State of the Union Message 1969, September 4, 1968. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969, Office Files of Joseph A. Califano, Box 73. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

48. See for instance: Leonard Harold Marks to Joe A. Califano. August 30, 1968. Folder: State of the Union 1969 Ideas and Proposals for Congress – I. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. Office Files of Joseph A. Califano. Box 88. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

James R. Jones to Joe Califano. September 4, 1968. Folder: office Files of Joseph Califano: State of the Union 1969 Ideas and Proposals for Congress—1. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969, Office Files of Joseph A. Califano, Box 88. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

Charles S. Murphy to Joe A. Califano. September 6, 1968. Folder: State of the Union 1969 Ideas and Proposals for Congress—I. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. Office Files of Joseph A. Califano. Box 88. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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whether expressed in specific numbers or in general language. Jim Gaither was responsible for developing this.

4. The principal tasks in each area during the coming decade;
5. Other problems that should be discussed in the television speech.⁴⁹

In a memorandum to President Johnson, his speechwriter Harry McPherson pointed out that the first draft of the domestic section was written as a document to be sent to Congress, not a speech to be delivered by the President. LBJ, however, delivered the Address in person on January 14, 1969. The purpose of the first part of the Address was to do some justice to the Johnson Presidency. Harry McPherson insisted that Johnson should “remind the country that neither you, nor any other single President, created the problems that you had to deal with, and that your successor will also encounter.” The purpose of the rest was to remind the Congress that it should keep legislative commitments to the American people. Although the President was urged “to make a 15–20 minute farewell address to Congress with his legislative program submitted as an appendix,” Johnson was not inclined to that idea.⁵⁰ The budget was to include “a number of major items that are either innovative, or aggressive in carrying out authorized programs.”⁵¹ Although McPherson indicated that he “tried to avoid ‘daring’ to Nixon,” he also wanted to give President Johnson “a format for suggested future action. . . . [and] give the Democratic majority something to chew on.”⁵² The Address outlined a broad

49. Harry McPherson to Joe Califano, Jim Gaither, Larry Levinson, Matt Nimetz, Art Okun, DeVier Pierson, Walt Rostow, Charlie Zwieck, memo, December 17, 1968. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

50. Memo, Harry C. McPherson to Secretary Clark Clifford, January 3, 1969. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

51. Memo, Harry C. McPherson to Horace Busby, January 3, 1969. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

52. Harry C. McPherson to the President, memo, January 3, 1969, 4:30 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69

set of legislative measures for the democratic majority in Congress. There was, reportedly, a strong feeling in some quarters that he was trying to commit Nixon or to maneuver the new President to certain programs by the SOTU. Perhaps, as Clark Clifford noted, Johnson just wanted to demonstrate his support for programs in which he believed and guide the new administration “along the lines the President felt were right for the country.”⁵³

In 1977, President Ford would not outline any legislative proposals with an understanding that it would be Carter’s duty to outline his priorities and legislative recommendations. At the Cabinet meeting on November 5, following Carter’s victory, President Ford made it clear, however, that he expected his Administration “to carry on until January 20 with the same philosophy, the same programs, and the same policies. The country cannot afford for us to stand still.”⁵⁴ Ford planned “to submit a budget for the fiscal year beginning next year, and also the economic report and a State of the Union message.”⁵⁵ He spent up to “several hours on Presidential business each day, including transition plans.”⁵⁶ On November 6, 1976, Jim Cannon submitted to the President and Dick Cheney memoranda with suggestions for the State of the Union in 1977.⁵⁷ Ford’s last State of the Union was to “set forth the record what has been accomplished during the 2½ years of the Ford Administration, and provide a status report of what this Administration proposed and started, but what is yet to be done.”⁵⁸ It was also an opportunity to outline a tactical

Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

53. Transcript, Clark M. Clifford Oral History Interview VI, 4/24/70, by Joe B. Frantz, Internet Copy, LBJ Library, retrieved on February 6, 2008 from http://www.lbjlibrary.net/assets/documents/archives/oral_histories/clifford_c/cliffor6.pdf.

54. Press Briefing, 11/5/76, Box 22, Ron Nessen Files, Gerald R. Ford Library. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. Retrieved on July 11, 2007 from <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/cabinet/761105.htm>.

55. *Ibid.*

56. *Ibid.*

57. Memorandum, Jim Cannon to the President, “Suggestions for the State of the Union,” November 6, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1977 General (4) Cannon Papers, Box 15. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

58. Memorandum, Jim Cannon to Dick Cheney, November 6, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1977

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strategy for Republicans to take toward the new Administration. As Means Grady pointed out, this was the “last major forum Republicans will have for some time, it is important we try to set a tone for the Party for the next several years.”⁵⁹ Means’s specific suggestions were oriented towards making the President’s posture more aggressive: focus on the challenges that the new Administration would have to face and by which the American people would hold the next Administration and Congress accountable. This approach, Means reasoned, would “put the President and the Administration on the offensive rather than the defensive and help to shape the political debate for the next several years.” Pressures to find creative ways to attract citizen participation in government should be placed on the new Administration.⁶⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The US Constitution stipulates that the President “shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.”⁶¹ As the Rhetorical Presidency validated public speaking as conducive to governing, the SOTU became a routine activity of the presidency in spite of the legal, time and organizational constraints accompanying the speechwriting process. These constraints make it difficult for the incoming President to take positions on issues. The outgoing President and his Administration go over the arduous annual task of crafting the SOTU and yet, in legislative terms, their effort is virtually irrelevant. During a presidential transition, the president-elect faces immense time pressures to produce the SOTU before its customary deadline and he has little knowledge about the programs. In terms of the content of the first SOTUs, Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Bush

General (4) Cannon Papers, Box 15. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. The Budget Message and Economic Report would be prepared by OMB and CEA.

59. Memo, Grady Means to Art Quern, “Comments on Draft Outline for the State of the Union,” December 1, 1976. State of the Union, 1971—drafts. Dean L. Overman Files, Box 4. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

60. *Ibid.*

61. US Constitution, Art. 2, sec. 3.

could offer little more than a ceremonial inaugural speech expressing basic viewpoints, broad objectives, and the promise of cooperation with Congress, rather than concrete, detailed programs.

President Eisenhower held a traditional understanding of the separation of power, which stressed congressional leadership in legislation and thought it was a mistake to speak so soon after the inauguration. President Kennedy inevitably found himself in a similar situation. Despite his speechwriter Ted Sorensen's effort to impose short deadlines on departmental submissions and the requirement to provide him with essential and terse material, as well as his swift writing process, the pressures of time were immense. Without having had more time to carefully weigh the details, some of President Kennedy's secretaries could not formulate and present their final judgments and announce decisions. Out of necessity, Kennedy's remarks were limited.

President Bush delivered the speech in the customary SOTU timeframe, but his speech was never referred to as the State of the Union Address even by its crafters. Rather, it was Bush's February 9 Speech. The suggested content of the Speech indicates that not programs but broad goals and principles that guided the President's approach to a variety of issues, along with the pledge of cooperation with the Congress could be offered. Despite the fact that Kennedy's, Eisenhower's and Bush's Addresses were necessarily limited in terms of their substance, all three Presidents used the occasion to personally deliver their Addresses and grasp the public and congressional attention.

Although since Truman, chief executives are expected to present an agenda, FDR advised the outgoing Presidents to leave specific recommendations for legislation to the incoming Presidents. Eisenhower's, Johnson's and Ford's last State of the Unions yielded to the Farewell Addresses. In terms of their legislative relevance it was a lame duck effort. President Eisenhower did not deliver it in person and left it for his successor to recommend new legislative programs. Johnson, unlike Eisenhower, delivered the farewell SOTU personally and the way LBJ's White House staff went about the preparation of the Address did not differ from the usual routine in other years. The process of soliciting submissions for the SOTU began early, already in the first days of September. Joe Califano routinely asked for "a detailed outline of new initia-

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tives.” Contrary to FDR’s recommendation to allow the incoming President to set policy agenda, concrete recommendations were submitted from several departments. Following the Address, however, some sensed that Johnson tried to maneuver Nixon to certain programs. Johnson’s final SOTU was a blend of credit claiming and position taking.

After the lost elections in November 1976, Ford did not want to stand still until Carter’s inauguration and planned to submit the Budget, the State of the Union and the Economic Report, as if they were relevant. Ford’s Address did not call for any specific legislation. His Address was more of a status report on what was started under his Administration and what still needed to be done. The main function of that Address was credit claiming.

The expectation of the modern presidency is that an outgoing President only reviews the existing state of national affairs and leaves specific recommendations for legislation to the incoming President. President George H. W. Bush complied with neither expectation. He gave neither the inaugural SOTU in 1989 nor the Farewell SOTU in 1993. As Bush relinquished the role of the chief legislator at the beginning of his presidency, there was little he could claim credit for at the end.

As far as FDR’s suggestion left in his 1937 SOTU warned his outgoing successors against the futility of producing their last SOTUS, if only it had warned his incoming successors against the difficulties of seizing leadership in their first.

CHAPTER TWO

“A FRIGHTENING ASSIGNMENT”: STATE OF THE UNION SPEECHWRITING FROM DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER TO GEORGE H. W. BUSH

“Writing speeches for great people is not the most enjoyable work in the world.”

Bryce Harlow¹

“What most people fail to realize is that making a major Presidential address is something akin to enacting a public law.”

Robert T. Hartmann²

The State of the Union Address is considered one of the most “significant and complex undertakings” of the Rhetorical Presidency.³ The altered meaning of presidential leadership, which triggered the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency encouraged frequent public appeals and increased the number of speeches

1. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, 132.

2. Robert T. Hartmann, *Palace Politics: An Inside Account of the Ford Years* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), 384.

3. Griffin, “Dwight D. Eisenhower. The 1954 State of the Union Address,” 69.

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delivered by the President. Because of the high demand for the President’s comment, Chief Executives could no longer solely write all of their speeches and would have to be assisted by speechwriters.⁴ Because of the broad circulation of presidential public utterances, Theodore Roosevelt’s successors became less willing to give impromptu speeches.

The speechwriting position in the White House appeared only a couple of years before the President could utilize radio to communicate with the people. A presidential speechwriter, however, as James Hume argues, “is not a recent development, a reaction to twentieth-century media demand.”⁵ Speechwriting dates back to the presidential years of George Washington. His famous Farewell Address, for instance, was ghosted by Alexander Hamilton. In fact, only a few Presidents, including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson, wrote their own speeches. Yet it was not until the 1920s that the White House actually hired a speechwriter—Judson Welliver—to assist President Harding and defend “what became an increasingly troubled and corrupt administration.”⁶ Welliver was the first White House staff person whose chief responsibility was to craft oratory for President Warren Harding, reportedly because the President’s English reminded “of dogs barking idiotically through endless nights.”⁷

Already in the 1880s, Chester Arthur employed a friend named Daniel Rollins to help draft presidential messages. As ghostwriting “would have been an unthinkable sharing of responsibilities at the end of the nineteenth century, Rollins went to great pains to keep his help to the ailing Arthur a total secret.”⁸ Speechwriters remained a rarity until the Administration of Calvin Coolidge

4. President Woodrow Wilson, unlike many of his successors, never employed a speechwriter. See: Gene Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The last years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964).

5. James C. Humes, *Confessions of a White House Ghostwriter: Five Presidents and Other Political Adventures* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publ., 1997), 5.

6. Denton and Woodward, *Political Communication in America*, 205.

7. Robert Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts. Presidents and their Speechwriters from FDR to George W. Bush* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 3.

8. Denton and Woodward, *Political Communication in America*, 205.

in 1923. Coolidge vastly increased the number of presidential speeches with the assistance of Judson Welliver and others. By establishing this precedent, the perception of the President's office changed. The President would be seen as a leader "whose fate was determined by the quality of his staff as well as his own efforts."⁹ Whether for better or worse, the speechwriting apparatus has ever since been a constant unit of the White House in one form or another. Officially, though, the White House Office of Speechwriting would not be established until President Nixon.

Karen M. Hult and Charles E. Walcott argue that the emergence of the disjunction of policy deliberations and speechwriting can be traced to the Johnson presidency. Until then, as Hult and Walcott point out, "presidential policy concerns drove presidential speech writing."¹⁰ People participating in the policy processes and the structure of the speechwriting organization were important. Starting with FDR, Presidents would rely on the help of their top advisors in connecting presidential speechwriting with the policy deliberations. The White House staffers would be involved in the policy exploration and discussion. The President would be an active participant "in writing sessions, providing guidance from the top of the White House hierarchy;" and speechwriting would be used as an occasion for policy deliberations.¹¹ Since LBJ, the authors point out, policymakers would cease to dominate the speechwriting process.¹² And this way of writing presidential speeches, Hult and Walcott assert, is illustrative of the trend that may no longer be part of the White House speechwriting reality, "[o]nce dominated by the President and top policy and political advisors, writing is now typically delegated to professional speechwriters who are often weakly connected to the President and the policy deliberation process," and "often too poorly informed about adminis-

9. *Ibid.*, 206.

10. Karen M. Hult and Charles E. Walcott, "Policymakers and Wordsmiths: Writing for the President under Johnson and Nixon," *Polity*, 30, no. 3 (Spring, 1998): 467.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

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tration objectives and policy proposals to write accurately and persuasively about them.”¹³

Also, as a consequence of Nixon’s restructuring of the speechwriting organization by creating a separate White House office for speechwriters, they would be expected to “articulate, clarify and defend Administration activities as well as mobilize support for the President;” the integration of the policymaking with speechwriting would be frustrated. Thus the shift, initiated by LBJ and furthered by Richard Nixon, resulted in “a growing disjunction between the content of presidential statements and the clear and accurate expression of administration goals and policy initiatives.”¹⁴ The increased number of special assistants and aides concerned with public relations and speechwriting, as Thomas Cronin points out, is “one of the more disquieting aspects of the recent enlargements of the presidential establishment.”¹⁵ Although ghostwriters and speechwriters are used interchangeably, ghostwriters are designated as those whose activity is concealed, while the activities of speechwriters are known.¹⁶ Wordsmiths, or experts on persuasion, as Jeffrey Tulis prefers, may be a relatively new development.

On the pages that follow, I demonstrate that the aforementioned general developments in presidential speechwriting do not necessarily apply to the SOTU process. As far as Hult and Walcott are right in claiming that during the Johnson presidency specialized writers appeared in the White House, the actual disjunction of policy deliberation and speechwriting during the SOTU process would not occur until the Bush presidency.

It must be stressed that significant documents like the State of the Union are fruits of “many, many hands.”¹⁷ Before the first draft of the SOTU ensues,

13. Ibid., 466.

14. Ibid., 467.

15. Denton and Woodward, *Political Communication in America*, 205, after Cronin.

16. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words. Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), footnote 15 to Chapter 1.

17. Harlow Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, 109.

a labor-intensive process that represents up to a year of research and complex policy elaborations take place.¹⁸ The standard procedure for initiating the annual programming process is the President's memorandum requesting government agencies' and departments' ideas and proposals for inclusion in the President's program. As the requested material starts to flow into the White House, several formal resources—"the machinery of presidential power"—that includes: the Cabinet and the senior staff within the Executive Office of the President, including the Office of Management and Budget, Council of Economic Advisors, Domestic Council, National Security Council—work closely with the President to sift through the accumulated material and develop ideas and policies for the inclusion in the Address. In formulating their policies, Presidents would also look outside the government to informal resources to seek fresh, informal ideas from the nation's leading intellectuals

18. "State of the Union Speech Represents Year of Research," *Washington Post*, January 5, 1965.

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or even closest relatives.¹⁹ Importantly, deliberation is an inseparable part of the SOTU process.

SPEECHWRITING UNDER PRESIDENT DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER: BRYCE HARLOW, “SPEECHWRITING IN THE MAINSTREAM OF POLICY MAKING”

Throughout his two terms, President Eisenhower had several speechwriters, including, Emmet John Hughes, Bryce N. Harlow, Kevin McCann (until October 1957), President’s personal friend who understood the President, his personality and idiom better than any other and was more “amanuensis”

19. President Eisenhower for instance, relied on the assistance of his brother Milton. Milton Eisenhower was President of Pennsylvania State University and one of President Eisenhower’s closest advisers. See: Dwight D. Eisenhower to Milton Stover Eisenhower, 2 February 1953, in Dwight Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, doc. 16, retrieved on January 8, 2008 from <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/first-term/documents/16.cfm>.

As an inheritor of the Kennedy presidency, President tried to act in the spirit of his predecessor. Princeton Professor, Eric Goldman, served as Johnson’s liaison to the intellectual community. Johnson instructed Goldman to solicit suggestions from leading intellectuals throughout the country to get suggestions for his Address and specific new ideas. See: Eric F. Goldman (Special Consultant to the President) to the President and Appropriate members of the White House Staff. “Suggested new ideas for State of Union Message.” December 21, 1963. 1/8/64 State of the Union Message, folder II. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 1, 1964–January 8, 1964. Box 92. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Johnson also resorted to consulting intellectuals when public concern about Vietnam was on the rise and public credibility was on the wane. See: 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—for and from the President. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

In the process of composing his State of the Unions, President Ford also reached out to the academic world and held half-formal dinner-seminars, or stag dinners, and seminar-lunches in the White House. Robert Goldwin, Special Consultant for the President and a member of the Domestic Council served as the Administration’s link with the nation’s community of scholars and thinkers and was coordinating communication and preparations for President Ford’s stag dinners and seminar-lunches in 1975. See: Robert A. Goldwin to Dinner-Seminar File, November 25, 1974. Folder: White House Seminars—State of the Union Themes, 12/19/74 Goldwin Papers, Box 19. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. Between February and November President Ford also met with the Southeast, Southwest, Midwest Western, the New England Governors and mayors in a series of Presidential Conferences, or town hall meetings, conducted around the country to seek their ideas and recommendations for domestic policy. The meetings with governors were perceived as “an opportunity to reach a group of Governors who are likely to be helpful as advocates for the passage of parts of your economic and energy proposals.” See: Memo, Jim Falk to the President, “Working Dinner with Southeast Governors,” February 3, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976, Chronology of Preparations (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

than “ghostwriter”; Arthur Larson (until the fall of ’58), Frederic Morrow, Malcolm Moos, assisted by Capt. Ralph Williams and Stephen Hess, and Fred Fox. Emmet Hughes was the President’s full time speechwriter until approximately September 1953. Hughes was also the first presidential assistant to hold the official position of speechwriter.²⁰

Between 1953 and 1955 the details of the SORU operation were handed to Bryce Harlow. Bryce Harlow’s prior speechwriting experience taught him that he would have to “become able to write in the vernacular of the President and understand his thinking.” And thus in connection with undertaking the assignment of presidential speechwriter, he accepted the job on one condition: “that I spend a great deal of time in the presence of the President so I could understand how he liked to express himself best, what he was thinking about, what his concerns were, his chance remarks—understand the client in order to write for the client.”²¹ Harlow attended “all the meetings of all of the principal activities in the White House, the Cabinet, the National Security Council ... press briefings and the legislative leaders’ meetings,” and accompanied the President on a trip. The things Harlow was interested in involved listening to the President speak, the words he had trouble with, expressions he preferred, what his normal conversation was, the kind of sentence structure that best fit the President’s speaking technique, the fiber of the President’s voice:

You take a voice like the heavy, guttural [original spelling] voice of President Eisenhower, you have to be quite careful, you don’t overwrite for a voice like that. Then, of course, you have to be so careful that you don’t overwrite for the President of the United States, because a simple expression by the President will bring the crowd to its feet cheering. You don’t have to use the devices in writing for the President that you do for a gentleman who’s running for justice of the peace, because the people don’t believe the guy who’s running for justice of the peace, and he therefore has to use superlatives and exaggerations and overstate his case.

20. Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts*, 71. Schlesinger points out that “Hughes’s predecessors all had broader portfolios that included speechwriting as a subset.”

21. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3 by John T. Mason Jr., May 1, 1967: 132. Columbia University Oral History Project. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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The President must understate his case, because the fact that he is saying it, in itself, overstates it. So watching him, watching how crowds reacted to various expressions he used—this way the idea of moving with him.²²

Under Bryce N. Harlow and upon his request, *speechwriting was brought into the mainstream of Administration policy making*. This integration of policy-making and speechwriting in the Eisenhower Administration was the result of the White House staffing, where there was no official speechwriting unit and the speechwriting duties were carried out by an Administrative Assistant Bryce Harlow and the agreement between him and the President to be present at all meetings. Despite Harlow’s background in Congressional Liaison Office, he did not, however, serve both as a speechwriter and policy advisor such as Clark Clifford under President Truman. When Bryce N. Harlow was assigned the duty of the actual writing of the 1954 SOTU, he admitted that a speechwriter in the White House can have “a very, very substantial influence on the policy, either by a methodology of presentation of the material, or by the inclusion or exclusion of ideas, and by the fact that he has to work so intimately with the President.”²³

The process of preparation of Eisenhower’s SOTU would involve discussion with the President as to the general outlook of the document, its length and the major thrusts. As the message evolved, the President would be directly involved in providing paragraphs, notes, ideas and suggestions. The Bureau of the Budget (BOB) would request submissions for the SOTU from all the executive departments and agencies, which produced immense aggregations of programs, policies, and recommendations. After initial sifting, the BOB transmitted them to the White House, where further sifting process would take place, including conferences, attended also by the President, on which programs shall be included in the SOTU, which in the Budget Message, which

22. Ibid.

23. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2, 108.

in the Economic Report, and which should be submitted by the departments to Congress, and which should be dropped.²⁴

The methodology of the Eisenhower White House reflected a staffing system which drew on both formal and informal staff resources during the composition process, President Eisenhower's personal involvement in the project, and the deliberate integration of speechwriting and policy-making activities as the speech evolved.²⁵ The President worked primarily with his Cabinet, the National Security Council, the House-Senate leadership, the Council of Economic Advisors. For Eisenhower the SORU was the "most important public document of the year."²⁶ The Cabinet meetings served "to crank up machinery" on the State of the Union and to initiate the annual programming process and were "the best way in which to come up with an idea that may or may not prove to be useful."²⁷ The members of the Eisenhower Cabinet were expected to prepare the recommendations for their parts of the message. Eisenhower, however, saw the role of the Cabinet secretaries as not solely representatives of the department or agency, but as "general advisors to the President."²⁸ He expected that when he put, for instance, a foreign policy item on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting, he would ask the whole Cabinet to discuss it, and not only Secretary Dulles. This finding provides further evidence for Fred Greenstein's claim concerning Eisenhower's view of his Cabinet as "a team" with "a strong sense of participation in framing an overall administration program."²⁹ Eisenhower also expected his Cabinet

24. *Ibid.*, 94.

25. Griffin, "Dwight D. Eisenhower. The 1954 State of the Union Address," 74.

26. Cabinet Meeting, August 13, 1954. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

27. Memo, Arthur S. Flemming to Bryce Harlow, December 17, 1954. Folder: Departmental Comments and Suggestions, State of Union 1955 (2); Harlow Records, Box 13. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

28. *Ibid.* The US Constitution does not explicitly mention the Cabinet. Art. 2, sec. 2 of the US Constitution mentions "principal officers" and as it reads: "he [the President] may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices."

29. Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982), 238.

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members to give the State of the Union “the highest priority within your own Department and your very personal attention.”³⁰ The Cabinet served as a discussion and review forum on the drafts. Prior to the Cabinet meeting, Bryce Harlow would distribute the draft among the members of the Cabinet, so that the body could reflect on the draft en masse and provide their reactions back to Harlow.³¹ Harlow would make handwritten remarks throughout the Cabinet Draft, reflecting inputs of individual secretaries. The revised draft would be again distributed among the same members. Although not always substantive, the remarks provide evidence for the Cabinet’s involvement in the SOTU preparatory process. In later years, with Harlow no longer in the White House, Secretary to the Cabinet Maxwell M. Rabb would ask the Cabinet to read a draft, write their comments, initial that paper and return it to him.³² In terms of their influence on formulating legislative programs, the members of the Eisenhower Cabinet were more influential than the White House staff.³³

Assistant to the President, Sherman Adams, headed the White House staff from 1953 to 1958. Adams coordinated domestic policy and assisted in the preparation of the President’s legislative agenda and was charged with soliciting material for the inclusion in the SOTUS.³⁴ President Eisenhower was also assisted by Gabriel Hauge, Presidential Assistant for Economic Affairs in the SOTU preparatory process. Hauge’s grasp of the Administration economic policy made him indispensable for the State of the Union project. Raymond J. Saulnier, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers and

30. Cabinet Meeting, August 13, 1954. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

31. Memorandum, Bryce Harlow to Governor Adams, Gen. Persons, Mr. Shanley, Mr. Hagerty, Gen. Cutler, Dr. Hauge, Mr. Martin, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Rabb, Col. Goodpaster, December 22, 1954. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Cabinet Draft (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

32. Draft, Maxwell M. Rabb to the Cabinet, January 9, 1957. Folder: State of the Union Message January 1957 (2). Papers of John Foster Dulles. Draft Presidential Correspondence and Speeches Series, Box 2. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

33. Wayne, *Legislative Presidency*, 38.

34. Letter, Governor Adams to Cabinet Members, July 30, 1953. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

Gabriel Hague, served as members of the core SOTU coordinating group and provided comments on the drafts of Eisenhower's SOTU.³⁵ As Griffin points out, "Hauge's position and expertise enabled him to coordinate the annual message. Thus it was to Hauge, rather than the newly arrived Harlow, that Adams assigned responsibility for the initial planning of the annual message."³⁶ Along with the small group of staff members, including Bryce Harlow, representatives from the Treasury, the Bureau of the Budget and the Council of Economic Advisors, Hauge was developing the so-called "January documents"—a strategic plan for the SOTU, the Economic Report and the Budget Message.

The spadework on Eisenhower's 1954 SOTU began already on July 30, 1953. Around mid-August 1953, Sherman Adams on behalf of the President sent a letter to Agencies and encouraged them "to submit a memorandum during the period October first to fifteenth which would contain ideas appropriate for the State of the Union Message."³⁷ Adams was aware of the challenge that all programs and recommendations could not be definitive three months before the planned delivery of the SOTU, but he assured that there would be later opportunity for revision."³⁸

The flow of material for the State of the Union began on September 30, 1953 and lasted throughout October.³⁹ By mid-November 1953, the President decided that he would deliver his 1954 SOTU personally.⁴⁰ A number of documents illustrate that Bryce Harlow sent an "informal request" to the departments for brief submissions.⁴¹ Harlow had "a large hand in the collec-

35. Draft no. 7. Staff. 12/31/57. Folder: State of the Union 1958 memorandums (3). Larson, Arthur Papers, 1932-93, Box 4. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

36. Griffin, "Dwight D. Eisenhower. The 1954 State of the Union Address," 71.

37. Letter, Governor Adams to Agencies, August 13, 1953. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (2) Harlow Records, 1953-61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Index. State of the Union Material. Folder: General—State of the Union Message—January 1954 (3), Harlow Records, Box 11. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

40. Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1956), 171.

41. Memo, Colonel C. E. Hutchin Jr. to Bryce Harlow, November 26, 1954. Folder: Defense

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tion of ideas, data and so forth” for the State of the Union.⁴² He requested and received submissions with recommendations for inclusion in the SOTUS, and coordinated those recommendations written by departments or agencies prior to drafting the speech.⁴³ Also Sherman Adams received suggestions for inclusions in the SorU of 1955.⁴⁴ As an “amanuensis” for the State of the Union “document” in 1954, Harlow began “the early sweeping up of relevant materials” in late September of 1953.⁴⁵ The major subject areas of the forthcoming State of the Union Address were assigned to various members of the White House Staff and each member was furnished with the State of the Union recommendations from respective departments and agencies. Each member was to prepare a draft of his portion of the State of the Union and submit it to Harlow. For instance, Max Rabb, Eisenhower’s Special Assistant for minority affairs, was to draft portions of the speech dealing with social security, welfare, health, and civil rights. C. D. Jackson, the President’s advisor on Cold War psychological operations, was assigned international affairs section.⁴⁶

To give writers some idea of the space limitations, Staff Secretary, Paul T. Carroll provided the breakdown of wordage per subject based on the analysis of previous SOTUS: Introduction—350 words; foreign affairs—1,100; national defense—700; fiscal and economic—1,600; government efficiency—700; natural resources—350; agriculture—400; labor—600; civil rights, social security, housing—1,300; conclusion—350.⁴⁷ As requested draft sections

Department Material, S. of U. 1955 (2). Harlow, Bryce N.: Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

42. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3, 140.

43. Memo, Colonel C. E. Hutchin Jr. to Bryce Harlow, November 26, 1954. Folder: Defense Department Material, S. of U. 1955 (2). Harlow, Bryce N.: Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

44. Memo, H. V. Higley to Sherman Adams, November 22, 1954. Folder: Defense Department Material, S. of U. 1955 (2). Harlow, Bryce N.: Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

45. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3, 141.

46. Memo, Bryce Harlow to the President, November 17, 1953. Folder: State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

47. Memo, Paul T. Carroll to Bryce Harlow (for info), November 17, 1953. Folder: General—

started to arrive, Harlow would be able to piece together a draft of the entire State of Union.⁴⁸

Throughout the process, Harlow updated the President on the drafting progress and already presented to the President the first complete draft. President Eisenhower would meet with Harlow, and they went over the draft together and made numerous changes in substance and style. Harlow also solicited staff comments on drafts to produce “a solid working paper” for the Cabinet meeting.⁴⁹ If any requested section needed rewriting, Sherman Adams would ask relevant secretary to prepare a rewrite, which may have needed still a final scrutiny of the language by technical officials.⁵⁰

The speechwriting responsibilities of the State of the Union would not be simply delegated to Bryce Harlow, but shared by him and the President’s staff with expertise in particular policy areas. In his capacity of a speechwriter, Harlow individualized the message and put it into the President’s language and style. This, however, was not a small accomplishment, given the different challenges Harlow had to overcome. Prior to the actual drafting, some submissions had to be eliminated, others compressed.⁵¹ To eliminate some material, first the President had to decide what would be “the center of emphasis in his

State of the Union Message—January 1954 (3), Harlow Records, Box 11. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

48. Memo, Robert Cutler to Bryce Harlow, November 30, 1953. Folder: General—State of the Union Message—January 1954 (3), Harlow Records, Box 11. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Robert Cutler—Special Assistant to the President—attached for the SorU, two copies of his draft related to the Defense Department on November 30, 1953. Cutler sent one copy to Arthur Flemming “to curve up and improve.” The content of the draft, which could not be located, was Cutler’s invention in $\frac{3}{4}$ and rest was based on memos submitted by Wilson, Flemming, Peterson, and Strauss.

49. Memo, Bryce Harlow to Gov. Adams, Gen. Persons, Mr. Shanley, Mr. Hagerty, Gen. Cutler, Dr. Hauge, Mr. Martin, Mr. Morgan, Mr. Rabb, Col. Goodpaster, December 14, 1954. Folder: State of Union—Third Draft – 1955 (1). Harlow, Bryce N.: Records 1953–61, Box 13. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

50. Memo, John Foster Dulles to Sherman Adams, December 22, 1953. folder: January 1954 S. O. U. (6), Harlow Records, Box 10. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

51. Memo, Bryce Harlow to the President, November 17, 1953. Folder: State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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message.”⁵² Given the immense aggregations of submissions in the White House, Harlow had to compress 100,000 words into a readable document of around 6,000 or 5,500, which “excludes automatically scores and thousands of words that need badly to be said about particularly attractive programs.”⁵³ Since the submissions are usually in the nature of proposals, early SOTU drafts may easily turn into a laundry list and give an impression of “a long series of disjointed recommendations.”⁵⁴ This was also the case with Harlow’s early drafts. The first draft of the 1954 SOTU was 40 pages long.⁵⁵

The compilation of the SOTU can be “a frightening assignment.”⁵⁶ A major challenge of the process, once the theme of the message was established, was to reconcile the conflicting interests of Cabinet members who would come to Bryce Harlow and insist that their section of the message be extended. People sent by the President over to Harlow would start coming to his office to talk about the ideas they shared with the President. Harlow recalled that at one point of writing a SOTU, he had five Cabinet members trying to “expand or otherwise modify their portions of the document that dealt with their affairs.”⁵⁷ Harlow would go about that conflict of interest in the following way:

I had to respond that the President says he wants this document kept shorter than a two hour speech, and if you want to go beyond what the document as it’s shaping includes, you’ll have to go and see him personally. I can’t do it, I have orders from him that it be kept as short as possible, so I can’t put all of what you’re asking here

52. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2, 95.

53. *Ibid.*, 140.

54. Memo, Harold E. Stassen to Bryce Harlow, “First draft—State of the Union Message,” December 22, 1953. folder: January 1954 S. O. U. (6), Harlow Records, Box 10. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

55. Draft #1, President’s editings, December 16, 1953. Folder: Drafts—State of the Union, December 1953 (10), Harlow Records, Box 10. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

56. Memo, Charlie Masterson to Bryce N. Harlow, December 20, 1954. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (1) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Masterson greeted Bryce with these congrats: “What a job you have done with this frightening assignment. Congratulations.”

57. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow, 140.

in that document, without excluding your colleague co-members sitting outside there in that office.⁵⁸

Writing the State of the Union is a night and day operation, which takes place until the last minute prior to the delivery. At the very end of the process on the 1954 SOTU, President held lunch with Harlow, the Vice President, the entire Cabinet, the policy members of the White House Staff to talk about the content of the SOTU draft. The draft as it existed at that point was “picked at, talked at, argued over. It went for a long time...”⁵⁹ Unexpectedly, despite the soon approaching deadline, Harlow came out of that meeting “with a newly-shredded document, to be sewn back together in some fashion. The message was to be given in about five days.”⁶⁰ Then, the President edited vigorously,

all through all of this. ... First thing you know, you were changing an edited portion on which he had really deliberated quite earnestly before he edited it. And yet by this time, you did not know whose editing was whose and whose writing was whose and what had happened precisely. You’d find out when you went back in to the President to go over that draft, and you had changed something he wanted particularly—you’d discover that in a hurry. Then there was a Cabinet meeting at the very end of it, just before, the day before the Address was given. The Cabinet met that morning, and I had to read the message to the Cabinet and the Cabinet was to take notes as I read, and then after I finished, to comment on the message, and the President was to tell me as they commented whether or not to make the change that Cabinet officer might think desirable.⁶¹

Harlow spent the afternoon of that day and all night trying to reconstruct again the decisions made at the Cabinet meeting. The President would then again make extensive edits, which Harlow had to incorporate to the Address. On the morning of January 7, 1954, following Harlow’s reading of the SOTU

58. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow, 96.

59. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3, 142.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

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and reviewing of the Address by the full Cabinet, he completed the final draft. Eisenhower’s second State of the Union in 1954—the Administration Bible—was regarded as a blueprint for the next three years. It was more than a major policy statement from the President; it was “a key document for the Eisenhower period.”⁶² That Address “put together, almost Sears & Roebuck Catalogue-ish, an immense and immensely detailed program, which he largely held to the balance of his time in the White House.”⁶³ It was the 1954 SOTU in which, as Richard Neustadt pointed out, Eisenhower “espoused a sweeping concept of the President’s initiative in legislation.”⁶⁴ Even in subsequent years when there was no great deal of novel legislation, the process of crafting the State of the Union Address was an overwhelming experience. What was suggested to be “a highly tentative experiment with an unconventional short type of State of the Union Message” in 1958, turned out a “colossal task.”⁶⁵ Arthur Larson, the former director of the United States Information Agency, had served as Special Assistant to the President since the end of October 1957, after Bryce Harlow left the White House. Larson had joined UN Ambassador Lodge and White House Press Secretary James Hagerty, among others, in drafting the State of the Union Address in 1958. The process entailed hours of hard work and as many as nineteen drafts were completed under Larson and his staff.⁶⁶ The most obvious weakness of the early drafts that could be identified in the D. D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, was their excessive length.⁶⁷ Larson would work closely with the President and would keep him updated on the progress of drafting and the changes made on the drafts. The

62. *Ibid.*, 144.

63. *Ibid.*

64. Richard E. Neustadt, “Presidency and Legislation: Planning the President’s Program,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Dec., 1955): 980.

65. Memo, Arthur Larson to Governor Adams, December 11, 1957. Folder: State of Union 1958 Memoranda (1). Larson, Arthur: Papers 1932–93. Box No 4. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

66. Arthur Larson, *Eisenhower: The President Nobody Knew* (New York: Scribner, 1968), 176.

67. Memo to the President, undated. Folder: State of Union 1958 Draft #6. Larson, Arthur: Papers 1932–93, Box 3. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

President would receive drafts from Larson and discuss with both Larson and Mac Moos to incorporate specific topics.⁶⁸

For the first few months of the last two years of the Administration, only Mac Moos and Ralph Williams dealt with speechwriting. In fact, it was the only time President Eisenhower had two full-time speechwriters instead of one.⁶⁹ There had always been one up until Ralph Williams joined the White House in 1958. His first job as a speechwriter was under Secretary of Navy, Robert Anderson. When Ralph Williams joined the White House, its organization did not enjoy the best reputation. It was not until a week after Williams joined the White House that he discovered that he was not the head speechwriter but Mac Moos. Williams, however, soon understood he could not have worked there, had he been the only speechwriter. For the whole fall season, Eisenhower was making one campaign speech after another for Republican members of Congress. Williams knew he could never have written speeches like that. He raised that point to the President as he interviewed him for the job.⁷⁰

Mac Moos and Ralph Williams were later joined by Steve Hess who first served as a consultant and in early 1959 became a Special Assistant in the White House. Mac Moos was the lead writer and general coordinator. Moos' and Williams' fields of competence, Williams remembered, "formed a nice balance" which suited both. "Moos was totally absorbed with the ins and outs of domestic politics in general and Republican politics in particular, and had little interest in the national security and foreign policy aspects of the

68. Memo, Arthur Larson to Mr. Moos, January 5, 1959. Folder: State of Union 1959, Larson, Arthur: Papers 1932-93. Box 5. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

69. Eisenhower Library Oral History Project, "OH-503 interview with Captain Ralph William," 16.

70. The Hatch act prohibits the regular serving employees, in uniform or out, of the federal government from engaging in political activity. When Eisenhower interviewed Williams for the job, Williams pointed out that he was ready to accept the job but that he didn't know how to legally go about political aspects of speechwriting. The President assured Williams he was not political and that he could as well serve as a Democrat. However, as Williams later started to believe, the President may have seen Williams as the head speechwriter, but after the political aspect was raised by Williams, the President may have rethought it and before Williams joined the WH, Moos became the chief speechwriter. See: Eisenhower Library Oral History Project, "OH-503 interview with Captain Ralph Williams."

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job, which he was happy enough to hand off to me—subject always to his own canny insights as to the best way to package and present them.”⁷¹ The normal procedure would be that Moos would work up a speech calendar for the coming several months, and as each event came up in turn, to begin with informal, joint or separate meetings with Hess and Williams to discuss the content of the speech. Moose would “sort out those ideas which had some merit and ask the originator to come back with a full text version for further consideration.”⁷² The phase that then followed was compared by Moos with the job of a carpenter. When he thought that something would be worth the President’s time, Moos would send in the first full-text draft. Correspondence between the speechwriters as well as Soru drafts in the last years of the Eisenhower Administration gets difficult to trace and locate. That may be because in the final years of the Eisenhower presidency, the cooperation between his speechwriters Moos and Williams was mainly oral. Soon after Ralph Williams joined the White House, he would quit writing memos to Moos and their interchange would be oral, “I’d drop in his office and we’d sit down and talk.”⁷³ Also, President Eisenhower was remembered by the members of his staff as a very demanding editor who occasionally overworked big speeches. Apparently the number of drafts grew up to fifteen or seventeen drafts of one speech. Some speech drafts did not survive and there may be fewer drafts deposited in the Eisenhower Library than actually written.⁷⁴

Assessment

Under President Eisenhower’s speechwriter Bryce Harlow, speechwriting was integrated with policymaking. This was made possible by the agreement between the President and his Administrative Assistant and speechwriter Bryce Harlow that he would work closely with the President and be present at

71. Ralph E. Williams Jr. to Patrick J. Haney. April 6, 1988. Folder: Letters, 1985–88, Ralph E. Williams: Papers, 1958–60 Box 1/2. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Eisenhower Library Oral History Project, “OH-503 interview with Captain Ralph William,” 17–18.

74. *Ibid.*, 19.

all meetings attended by the President. Although Harlow did not serve both as a speechwriter and policy advisor, he had a close connection to the policy formation process and a substantial influence on the policy by the way he presented the material in the speech and by including or eliminating ideas from the speech. The major subject areas of the SOTU were assigned to members of the White House staff with recommendations from respective departments. The members of the White House staff, not Bryce Harlow, were responsible for the preparation of the relevant portions of the SOTU and submitting them to the speechwriter. Although Harlow personally would not generate policy input for the SOTU, he was no wordsmith. Rather, the job of Eisenhower's speechwriters could be compared to a job of a carpenter—carving the State of the Union draft from the accumulated material generated and developed by the Cabinet and the White House staff, and make their input sound as if it had originated with the President.

SPEECHWRITING UNDER PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY: THEODORE CHAIKIN SORENSEN, “AN ABSOLUTELY EXTRAORDINARY PERSON”

Under President Kennedy, the White House staff and not the Cabinet would be the primary generator of policies.⁷⁵ Kennedy's personal advisors had broad assignment areas.⁷⁶ Theodore Sorensen, who officially held the title of Special Counsel, was Kennedy's chief domestic advisor who oversaw the development and presentation of the President's legislative program. His two assistants Myer 'Mike' Feldman and Lee C. White were lawyers who dealt with more routine work but they were also involved in the SOTU process. Feldman held the title of Deputy Special Counsel to the President and was the contact with the legislative arm of the Bureau of the Budget.

75. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964. John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, 11.

76. As Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. noted, Kennedy “liked to regard his staff as generalists rather than specialists and had a distressing tendency to take up whatever happened to be on his desk and hand it to whoever happened to be in the room.” For more information on Kennedy's White House staff see: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days. John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 686–89.

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His role in the State of the Union process was to analyze task force reports, departmental and other submissions received in connection with the State of the Union.⁷⁷ Influential aides who participated in the policy-making process in the Kennedy White House included Appointments Secretary Kenneth O’Donnell; Ralph Dungan who wrote speeches and Lawrence O’Brian, who directed congressional liaison activities.

The central role in President Kennedy’s speechwriting operations was played by Theodore C. Sorensen. Sorensen was coordinating the State of the Union efforts throughout the JFK presidency and was responsible for crafting the message and developing the domestic portions of Kennedy’s Addresses. The procedure of soliciting information for Kennedy’s State of the Union Addresses was the following: Sorensen would request submissions for the State of the Union, and after they arrived at the White House, they would be analyzed by Mike Feldman and put into the form of an address by Ted Sorensen. Some of the submissions were also provided to John Galbraith. Presidential advisers including economic advisers Walter Heller, John Galbraith, Special Assistant to the President Arthur Schlesinger, or Walt Rostow, who served as Deputy Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and as Chairman of Policy Planning Council in the Department of State from 1961 to 1966, were charged with drafting specific policy area portions of the SORU. These policy feeds were subsequently submitted to Ted Sorensen, who incorporated them into an address. Also, the Bureau of the Budget (BOB) was drawn upon as new proposals were put together for presentation to the Congress.⁷⁸ Ted Sorensen worked closely with both BOB directors David E. Bell and his successor Kermit Gordon on the President’s legislative program. Bell’s task was to provide summary estimates of first year appropriations and expenditures for the various legislative proposals.⁷⁹

77. Myer Feldman, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, August 6, 1966, 368–69. John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

78. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964. John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, 6.

79. Memo, Wilbur J. Cohen to David E. Bell, November 13, 1961. Box 70. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961–63. Folder: State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 11/13/61–12/21/61. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

President Kennedy was updated on the progress of the SOTU drafting, as his name can be occasionally found on the upper right margin of the SOTU drafts next to Galbraith's and Feldman's.⁸⁰ Galbraith, for instance, was involved in drafting the economic portion of the State of the Union.⁸¹

The basic pattern of soliciting, sifting through and analyzing submissions, drafting, circulating, editing the SOTUS were all part of the routine SOTU process in the Kennedy White House too,

Prior to the State of the Union address we took the task force reports, we took submissions by all the departments and agencies regarding what they considered important, and what their programs they thought should be; and what they would recommend the president say. And we took an analysis that we made ourselves of our program as expressed by the President ... and put them all together. The job of putting that in address form—the form for an address—was Sorensen's.⁸²

Ted Sorensen's operations had no parallel to other White House staffers examined in the present study. Theodore Sorensen was the primary drafter of all of Kennedy's State of the Union Addresses, a skillful coordinator and writer. While in the Eisenhower White House there could be as many as seventeen drafts of the SOTU, it typically took Sorensen up to four major

80. State of the Union, Draft #1, Undated. Folder: Sorensen Papers. Speech File 1961-63 State of the Union Message I, 1/30/61 Drafts 1/29/61. Box 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

81. Draft S of U Last Draft - J. K. G., undated. Papers of John Kenneth Galbraith. White House Files 1961. Folder: Addresses: State of the Union Address: Draft typescripts, 26-27 January 1961, Box 533. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library. See also Draft #1 State of the Union Message, undated. Papers of John Kenneth Galbraith. White House Files 1961, State of the Union Address, Draft Typescripts, 1/26/61-1/27/61. Box 76. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

State of the Union, Draft #2, January 29, 1961. Folder: Sorensen Papers. Speech File 1961-63 State of the Union Message I, 1/30/61 Drafts 1/29/61. box 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

Draft #2. Memorandum, J. K. Galbraith to Theodore Sorensen, "State of the Union Message," January 26, 1961. Papers of John Kenneth Galbraith. White House Files 1961, State of the Union Address, Draft Typescripts 1/26/61-1/27/61. Box 76. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

82. Feldman, interview by John F. Stewart, 369-70. John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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drafts to develop the final version of the Address. Ted Sorensen’s drafts were often double-spaced to allow space for new language to be inserted between the text’s lines. Handwriting between the text’s lines reflects the changes made by Sorensen or suggested by selected departments and agencies.⁸³ And there could have been four to five drafts #2, each including handwritten remarks and edits. Draft #3 would be an edited version of draft #2, incorporating edits and improvements made on the former draft.⁸⁴

Sorensen was not only an extremely able writer, but he was also known for his close and long association with and dedication to President Kennedy. Ted Sorensen served as a Legislative and Administrative Assistant and speech-writer for John F. Kennedy during Kennedy’s senatorial years. When the President-elect began assembling his team of associates in the White House, he decided to rely heavily on many people who had been associated with him when he was a senator. David Bell, who was appointed by President-elect Kennedy as Director of the Bureau of the Budget at the close of 1960, considered them as “extremely able men.”⁸⁵ Bell particularly lauded Theodore Sorensen who “was certainly the number one figure, although he was youngest in age.” Bell’s opinion of Sorensen was “extraordinarily high,” and considered him perhaps “the ablest government officer” he has ever seen.⁸⁶ Although Bell, too, most highly regarded such people as Marshall, Clark M. Clifford, McNamara, he simply thought that Sorensen was “an absolutely extraordinary person. He became in the White House primarily the person who was responsible for assisting the President in developing his policies and his programs, and expressing those policies and programs in messages to Congress, in speeches, and in other forms of public statements.” Myer ‘Mike’ Feldman and Lee C. White worked directly for Sorensen and both of them

83. Draft #2, Master Copy, January 8, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 9161–63 State of the Union Message 1/11/62 drafts 1/8/62. Box 69. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

84. Draft #3, January 9, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 drafts 1/8/62–1/9/62. Box 69. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

85. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964: 16, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

86. *Ibid.*

were “extremely able people.” In Bell’s eyes, the most impressive thing about Sorensen was

his balance of judgment. He seemed to me almost uncannily able to weigh violently conflicting advice, extremely complicated substantive arguments, extraordinarily controversial issues, and cut through to recommendations for action which—I don’t mean I necessarily invariably agreed with them—but they certainly averaged higher than the recommendations of anybody else I have ever seen in government. In addition to this, Sorensen had the ability to operate at fantastic speed in obtaining and mastering material and in preparing drafts for the President’s use, whether they were speeches, or messages to Congress, or whatnot.⁸⁷

The typical pattern in the Kennedy White House with Sorensen responsible for the speechwriting operation was

... for material to be gathered, meetings to be held to discuss substance, and then Sorensen would turn out a draft in an incredibly short period of time for the President to work over, and to sign off on, and to send the message or make the speech. Frequently, from the time Sorensen first started a draft until the President’s message went to Congress or the speech was made, could be 48 hours or less. This meant that Sorensen drove himself inhumanly, particularly in the early days of the Kennedy Administration when the President wanted to get before the Congress a legislative program which covered a lot of fields—national defense, education, health, natural resources, foreign aid, and so on. During that period of time in late January, February, and March of 1961 when Sorensen was producing all these messages, there were several occasions on which he worked all night and through the next day in this process. Whether he could have better organized his own time and that of the rest of us who were working with him on these matters is a moot question. ... It required extraordinary energy on Sorensen’s part, but he had that extraordinary energy.⁸⁸

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

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Kennedy’s pattern of speechwriting collaboration on major speeches and other policy statements reflected decisions taken in meetings in which Sorensen participated. That enabled him “to spell out the reasons and sometimes the very words he had used in those meetings. Groups of advisers could suggest outlines and alternations, and they could review drafts, but group authorship could not produce the continuity and precision of style he desired, or the unity of thought and argument he needed.”⁸⁹

For Sorensen the actual drafting was very heavily an individual job. Sorensen did not like to have others sitting around while he was writing. The drafts of the State of the Union Addresses are collegiate products in that they require diverse policy expertise and speechwriting skills. Sorensen was of the opinion that the pattern of several of speechwriters working on a draft jointly would be “an enormous waste of time. While he wanted and held adequate meetings to discuss issues that needed discussion, he also worked very extensively from written material, and the drafting itself was essentially a solitary process. Sorensen was a towering figure on the Kennedy White House staff.”⁹⁰ Ted Sorensen became “steadily more useful to the President as he learned more about the various substantive fields that the President had to deal with, and particularly as Sorensen became more involved in foreign policy matters.”⁹¹ It was not until the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion that the President involved Sorensen in the foreign policy decisions in addition to the budget and fiscal policy field. The fiscal policy recommendations were “extensively discussed with Sorensen, and he played as leading a role in the development of recommendations in this field as he did in all the other fields of policy outside of the foreign area where he shared the role with Bundy ...”⁹²

Bell also noted that it was always difficult to distinguish Sorensen from

89. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 58.

90. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, 17–21. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

91. *Ibid.*

92. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, 63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

the President. Sorensen might not have made his personal recommendations to the President in writing, but typically Sorensen influenced presidential decisions “in shaping what went to the President from other officers in draft messages or speeches” and “in many and numerous private conversations with the President at all hours of the day or night.”⁹³ Not all of the drafts were typed. Typically, Sorensen’s drafts of Kennedy’s State of the Unions would be written in longhand. Sorensen wrote in longhand anything of importance.⁹⁴ Once he knew Kennedy’s thoughts on a relevant subject, what he wanted to say, their “style and standard became increasingly one.”⁹⁵ As a speechwriter, Sorensen benefited from the fact that Kennedy involved him in many of his Senate activities and exposed to his both public and private utterances. What emerged from that close cooperation was a Sorensen-Kennedy style of speechwriting:

The Kennedy style of speech-writing—our style, I am not reluctant to say, for he never pretended that he had time to prepare first drafts for all his speeches—evolved gradually over the years. Prepared texts were carefully designed for an orderly presentation of their substance but with no deliberate affectation of any certain style. We were not conscious of following the elaborate techniques later ascribed to these speeches by literary analysts. Neither of us had any special training in composition, linguistics or semantics. Our chief concern was always audience comprehension and comfort, and this meant: (1) short speeches, short clauses and short words, wherever possible; (2) a series of points or propositions in numbered or logical sequence, wherever appropriate; and (3) the construction of sentences, phrases and paragraphs in such a manner as to simplify, clarify and emphasize.⁹⁶

The way Sorensen worked on the SOTU was quite simple. He would first write a rough draft in longhand, which once finished, would be typed on a legal-sized paper. Then Sorensen would send it to respective agencies and

93. Ibid.

94. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 60.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

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departments, sometimes only relevant portions would be distributed among selected agencies, or recipients. After the departmental review, he would either introduce the changes suggested by the departments or reject them. Then, Sorensen would repeat the process of reading the draft and editing it by adding new sentences, striking out old paragraphs and substituting them with new handwritten remarks on any available space there was on the draft. A problem with reading Sorensen’s speech manuscripts can be his handwriting: it was very small and in some places utterly illegible.

To coordinate the huge amount of material that was submitted by the departments and agencies, Sorensen would sort matters out for himself and sketch a layout of the message before he initiated drafting. This approach is illustrative of how Sorensen managed the bulky governmental material and organized the drafting process. For instance, in 1962, Sorensen divided the Address into introduction, two main parts: Part I covered domestic issues: economic recovery and growth and ways to improve life for all Americans. Part II covered the foreign affairs and was followed by conclusions; both introduction and each of the two main parts singled out a number of concrete issues that were to be addressed in the message under concrete headings, and an estimated number of pages to discuss an issue, at least 33 pages, to cover everything. For example, the first subsection of the domestic portion of the SOTU was to review the Administration’s record and achievements in that area, then it moved to address the goals that the Administration wanted to achieve and which were directly related to the economic growth: job training, youth employment, tax credit, and so on and so forth. It was a well-organized and logical approach to drafting the SOTU.⁹⁷

Reflecting on Kennedy’s speeches, Theodore Sorensen noted that the President’s major speeches were:

... an important tool for his Presidency. He often used them to define administration decisions in specific terms or to convey those decisions throughout the government as well as the rest of the world.

⁹⁷ Draft, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961–1963 State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 12/22/61–1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

We had more experts from whom to seek ideas, facts and first drafts than we had in pre-presidential years. Next-to-final drafts were usually submitted to the agencies concerned for their views, and this process was so slow on foreign policy speeches that McGeorge Bundy would gather all concerned around the table in his office to go over the draft in one sitting. We also had more pressures for completing authorized texts well ahead of time for advanced distribution and foreign-language translation.⁹⁸

Unlike other speechwriters discussed in the present work, Theodore Sorensen began to solicit governmental material for inclusion in the President's *SOTU* quite late, between mid-December and the last week of December. Departmental submissions for the President's '62 *SOTU* would start to flow to the White House around mid-December 1962 and would continue until early January 1963.⁹⁹

The drafting of a major address for the President, as Sorensen suggested, required not only rhetorical skills, but also policy knowledge. In preparing the initial draft of the President Kennedy's 1962 State of the Union Message, Sorensen felt that he was "sufficiently prepared on the legislative, budgetary and other program policies," he needed departmental and agency assistance in connection with summarizing their accomplishments, developments or policies."¹⁰⁰ Walt Rostow was responsible for developing the foreign affairs section of the State of the Union.¹⁰¹ Rostow sent McGeorge Bundy and Ted Sorensen already the first draft of the foreign policy portion of the State of the Union. Rostow was appalled by the extent of public and congressional criticism of the US foreign policy and thought that it was critically important that

98. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 330.

99. Memo, W. W. Wirtz to Theodore C. Sorensen, December 17, 1962. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/14/63 memorandums 6/14/62–12/26/62. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

100. Memorandum to Departments and Agencies, December 22, 1961. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 12/22/61–1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

101. State Department Draft, December 21, 1961. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 Memoranda 12/22/61–1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

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the SOTU conveyed the sense of confidence in America’s actions abroad.¹⁰² As Kennedy’s ’62 SOTU was produced only several months after the failed military invasion of Cuba, the foreign policy material submitted for incorporation in the Address included the following critical assessments of US actions in Latin America and Cuba: “Many mistakes have been made by this nation in Latin America over (its) policies over the years—many mistakes have been made in Cuba since the rise of Batista and before. This Administration made another”¹⁰³ Undersecretary Ball added the following statement to the foreign policy material: “[i]n Cuba we made our worst mistake”¹⁰⁴ By the time the final draft was produced, the idea to admit the Administration’s mistakes was dropped and the final draft did not even mention the existence of Cuba.

An important finding concerning Sorensen’s methodology was that he would send only pertinent portions of the draft to the relevant departments and agencies for comments. For instance, a copy of the whole draft of the ’62 SOTU covering only the domestic portion of the draft and divided into two parts with covering memorandum, were sent to the Council of Economic Advisers—Dr. Heller, David Bell (the Bureau of the Budget), and Secretary of the Treasury Dillon. As Sorensen noted, “the one copy only thing is per Mike Feldman’s instructions—he and Lee are in charge of deciding who gets what.”¹⁰⁵ Another document reveals that Sorensen left for Myer (Mike) Feldman and Lee White to decide who would get “the whole thing” or not.¹⁰⁶ The “whole thing” of the foreign affairs section was to be submitted

102. Memorandum, W. W. Rostow to McGeorge Bundy, December 22, 1961. Folder: SP 2-4 State of the Union Message 1-1-62—1/14/63. Box 917. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

103. Foreign Affairs section, SU, Undated. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-1963 State of the Union Message 1/11/62 Memoranda 12/22/61-1/19/62 + undated. Box 70.

104. Draft, Foreign Policy Material for Incorporation in the State of the Union Message, January 3, 1962. Folder: SP 2-4 State of the Union Message 1-1-62—1/14/63. Box 917. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

105. Special Assistant Counsel to the President—Lee C. White.

106. Memorandum, to Messrs. Feldman and White, January 8, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-1963 State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 12/22/61-1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

to secretaries: Dean Rusk, Walt W. Rostow, George Ball, Chester Bowles, Robert McNamara, Douglas Dillon, Edward Murrow (USIA), President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, and General Maxwell Taylor. Sections of that portion of the draft were to be sent to James Webb (NASA), Ed Welsh (Space Council), Jerome Weisner (Science Advisor), Walter Heller (CEA), and Edward Gudeman (Commerce).¹⁰⁷

Typically, early drafts of the SOTU run long. They require distribution among contributors, incorporation of their changes, substantial revisions, editing, rewriting, compression, the President's review and his acceptance. Sorensen would put down on paper something to start with and wanted Bundy, Gordon and Schlesinger to review "the whole basic scope and approach, improving the style and punch, and recommending specific changes, which should go into the first draft to be shown the President." Specifically, Sorensen urged to "make cuts to match all additions," and "do what you can to give it more style and less jargon."¹⁰⁸ Editors were free to add and delete words, sentences, paragraphs or even entire sections. Anything that they thought should stay, should be underlined in red. These changes were to be submitted to Sorensen so that he could incorporate them into a revised draft. When the draft ran twice too long, the way Sorensen went about the cutting of excess material was to distribute a draft among selected reviewers and ask them to reduce the draft "in size by 50 percent or more ... check the accuracy of all statistics and other statements," as well as "recommend improvements in grammar and style."¹⁰⁹ Sorensen admitted that the first draft was "largely a laundry list."¹¹⁰ It was "imperative," Sorensen stressed, "that

107. Draft, SOTU Foreign Affairs section, undated. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-1963 State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 12/22/61-1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

108. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to McGeorge Bundy, January 6, 1963. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63. State of the Union Message 1/14/63 Memoranda 1/2/63-1/10/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

109. Memorandum to Departments and Agencies, January 8, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 12/22/61-1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

110. Note, TCS to Arthur Chet, January 8, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memoranda 12/22/61-1/19/62 + undated.

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specific changes in wording, not general comments be suggested, that these changes be incorporated on attached excerpts and that each department or agency coordinate all of its suggestions in one version.”¹¹¹ Between January 4 and January 10, Sorensen wrote and rewrote three to four drafts of the State of the Union.

Assessment

Typical of the speechwriting organization under President Kennedy was that the actual drafting of the State of the Union was centralized in one person—Presidential Counsel Ted Sorensen. Sorensen’s contribution to composing the speech was far greater than reducing other people’s ideas to paper and piecing together draft sections received from policy experts. Under Sorensen, speechwriting was combined with policy-making. Another possible reason why the SOTU speechwriting process under Ted Sorensen was less convoluted than under other chief speechwriters was not only Sorensen’s highly regarded speechwriting skills, his ability to quickly process information from numerous sources, but his managerial skills, including his collaboration skills, his ability to recognize the roles and responsibilities of others, and set clear expectations as to how others could contribute to the speechwriting process. Instead of requesting comments on the drafts, Sorensen urged specific changes in wording and that those changes were incorporated on the draft. Sorensen would also make sure that the reviewer precisely indicated what should have been cut, and what should remain. Of no less importance was that he would distribute only the relevant portions of the speech among respective departments for review, with only selected departments receiving the entire draft. Following the departmental review, he would either introduce the changes suggested by the departments or reject them. Thus in terms of influencing the content of Kennedy’s SOTU, the White House would have the final word on issues.

Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

111. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to Kermit Gordon, January 9, 1963. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/14/63 Memorandums 1/2/63–1/10/63. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

SPEECHWRITING UNDER PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Four major speechwriters assisted Lyndon Baines Johnson in drafting his State of the Union Addresses including Ted Sorensen, Richard Goodwin, Bill Moyers (assisted by Will Sparks), and Harry McPherson. These four were mainly responsible for sketching the domestic part of the Address as well as incorporating the foreign policy material provided for them by Walt Rostow, Counselor and Chairman of Policy Planning Council in the State Department, and meshing these two portions together into a speech. Bill Moyers, Joe Califano and Jack Valenti would be involved in coordinating the SOTU efforts on both the domestic and foreign policy portions of Johnson's Addresses. Ted Sorensen, who crafted all of Kennedy's State of the Unions, was the primary author of Johnson's 1964 SOTU, which declared the "unconditional war on poverty."

A scheduled and systematic collection of policy ideas was handicapped and the development of the 1964 State of the Union began on December 23, with the Preliminary Discussion of the State of the Union.¹¹² The meeting was held to discuss a number of domestic, international issues and possible policy positions.¹¹³ Also on December 23, the President instructed to submit drafts of suggestions for the State of the Union to Ted Sorensen.¹¹⁴ Following the hectic period after the Kennedy assassination, the President and his wife arrived at the Ranch on December 24. Theodore Sorensen would also stay at the Ranch in Texas to work on the message. Prior to the actual drafting, Sorensen worked with the ideas and recommendations submitted to him over Christmas 1963. Rostow sent Sorensen two kinds of material to work from. One was a consolidated State Department draft that represented the views

112. Discussion Points, Preliminary Discussion of State of the Union Message, December 23, 1963, 3 P.M. Separate Topics for Discussion. Folder: State of the Union Message 1/8/64 memoranda 12/20/63-1/7/63 Sorensen Papers, LBJ Speech File 1963-1964, Box 77. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

113. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 8, 1964-January 21, 1964, Box 93. Folder: 1/8/64 State of the Union Message. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

114. Letter, State of the Union Message, James Rowe to Theodore Sorensen, December 31, 1963. Folder: State of the Union Message 1/8/64 memoranda 12/20/63-1/7/63 Sorensen Papers, LBJ Speech File 1963-1964, Box 77. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

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of most of the State Department staff, but was not yet re-submitted to the contributors for their review; it was “raw material” that required a check-back with Secretary Rusk at a later stage. The other document Rostow sent to Sorensen emerged from “private enterprise with the President” on December 23. It was also based on an uncleared State Department draft.¹¹⁵

Sorensen had a significant impact on what went into the 1964 SOTU and tried to save the Address from being another laundry list.¹¹⁶ On January 1, 1964 he made the first attempt to put ideas into President Johnson’s first domestic and foreign policy statement. Sorensen initialized his drafts TCS, as evident in the upper part of the first page of the first draft.¹¹⁷ Although the draft needed cutting, a line-by-line comparison of this draft with the final draft of the Address indicates that the main body of the speech ensued from this first draft. Once Sorensen put the first draft of the State of the Union together, Bill Moyers, who coordinated the SOTU effort that year, requested comments on the draft. Arthur Schlesinger and Walter Heller would act as the principal editors. While Heller generally provided language for economic sections of the Address and checked figures, Schlesinger’s input mainly concerned the foreign policy section of the draft.¹¹⁸ A carbon copy of his memo was also

115. Memo, Walt Rostow to Theodore Sorensen, December 24, 1963 President’s Speeches, State of the Union, Jan. 4 1965, [1 of 2].

116. Note, an undated note from Jack Valenti to the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 8, 1964–January 21, 1964, Box 93. Folder: “1/8/64 State of the Union Message.” Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

117. Draft, 1964 State of the Union Message – First Draft, January 1, 1964. Folder: 1/8/64 1964 State of the Union Message Folder II. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 1, 1964–January 8, 1964, Box 92. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

118. Memo, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Walter Jenkins, “State of the Union,” January 2, 1964, Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 8, 1964–January 21, 1964, Box 93. Folder: “1/8/64 State of the Union Message.” Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Insert *B* attached to the memo indicated that the sentence: “I will be brief, for our time is necessarily short and our agenda is already long” is Heller’s. The language of Johnson’s pledge for progressive and frugal government is Schlesinger’s. See: Draft, Insert B to Memorandum, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Walter Jenkins, January 2, 1964. Folder: 1/8/64 State of the Union Message. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 8, 1964–January 21, 1964, Box 93. Folder: 1/8/64 State of the Union Message. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Draft, 1964 State of the Union Message – First Draft, Walter Heller’s comments, undated. Folder: 1/8/64 State of the Union Message. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 8, 1964–January 21, 1964, Box 93. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

sent to Sorensen. The structure of a completely new seven-page redraft of the foreign affairs, then section “V” of the message, stapled to that memo was Rostow’s and the language was Schlesinger’s. The main body of the redraft focused on foreign assistance and “reflected the honest opinion of many different men” in the Johnson Administration.¹¹⁹

Throughout the Johnson presidency three successive BOB directors, including Kermit Gordon, Charles Schultze, and Charles Zwick were involved in the SOTU process from the outset.¹²⁰ The BOB would comment on the early drafts of the SOTU and submit suggestions up to the moment the Address “finally clicked.”¹²¹ The BOB also participated in the SOTU clearance process.¹²² As soon as the last draft of a SOTU was produced, it would once again run through the Bureau of the Budget for final check.¹²³ The composition of the content of the SOTU was the result of negotiations and cooperation between several individuals, including the speechwriter and the BOB director, to assure that the draft came close to what the President wanted in the budget section.¹²⁴

Jack Valenti and Bill Moyers contributed stylistic improvements to the President’s Address.¹²⁵ More interesting than their edits is Valenti’s draft, or

119. Memo, McGeorge Bundy to the President, January 2, 1964. Folder: 1/8/64 State of the Union Message. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 8, 1964–January 21, 1964, Box 93. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

120. Draft, 1964 State of the Union Message – First Draft. Folder: 1/8/64 State of the Union Message Folder III. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 1, 1964–January 8, 1964. Box 92. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

121. Bureau of the Budget Route Slip, Kermit Gordon to Bill Moyers, January 4, 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (Folder III). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson December 18, 1964–January 4, 1965, Box 135. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

122. Memo, Elmer B. Staats to Bill Moyers, January 2, 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Folder IV. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

123. Memo, Joe Califano to the President, January 17, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968 Draft 1/17/68 2:00 P.M. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968–January 23, 1968, Box 263. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

124. McPherson to the President. January 10, 1969, 9:40 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 4th draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

125. Draft, State of the Union Message, Draft 2. Folder: 1/8/64 1964 State of the Union

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“a connected copy,” which gives an insight into how the SOTU drafts may have been produced. Most likely in an effort to save time on rewriting the entire draft, draft #5 was cut up and pieced together, or connected, with new input, to make draft #6.¹²⁶

Richard Goodwin: “an idea man, not a word man”

After the '64 election victory, President Johnson retained the essence of the Kennedy system and brought his own “advisers/writers.” These included: Bill Moyers, who oversaw the legislative agenda and also coordinated the State of the Union effort; Jack Valenti, Joseph Califano (Johnson’s top domestic aide, handled the domestic program); Douglass Cater, Cabinet Secretary Horace Busby, Elizabeth Carpenter, Lady Bird Johnson’s Press Secretary, and a principal speechwriter Richard Goodwin. For Moyers, Valenti and Califano, speechwriting was not their main occupation; they were first of all presidential top line aides who would also help the President with his speeches. President Johnson also tried to keep Ted Sorensen, which Horace Busby thought, “was very unrealistic.”¹²⁷ Although Ted Sorensen had come to help do the '65 State of the Union, Richard Goodwin was the principal speechwriter of that Address. Goodwin, most importantly, considered himself

Message Folder II. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 1, 1964–January 8, 1964, Box 92. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. The second draft is initialized *bm* or *B. M.* One characteristic of Bill Moyer’s handwriting was his tendency to write a small case letter *r* as upper case regardless of its position in a word. Moyers would shorten some sentences, rephrase others, and express his general approval by making a tick on each page in the upper left hand corner. Moyers’s edits were later incorporated into the undated Draft #3. See: Undated, 11 pages long, was a Xerox from quick copy, Archives. Juanita Roberts. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Jack Valenti’s Draft, dated January 6, 1964 was a short form from final draft. It was a “connected copy” as it says “except for two sentences yet to come.” See: Draft, 1964 State of the Union, January 6, 1964. Folder: 1/8/64 1964 State of the Union Message Folder III. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 1, 1964–January 8, 1964, Box 92. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

126. Note, MF to Dorothy Territo, January 9, 1964. Folder: 1/8/64 1964 State of the Union Message Folder II. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 1, 1964–January 8, 1964, Box 92. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

127. Horace Busby, Interview VII, Michael Gillette, retrieved on March 4, 2008 from http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/search/Oral_History/oh_search.html.

more “as an idea man, not a word man.”¹²⁸ His scope was mainly domestic affairs. And in foreign affairs, he had little impact on reshaping Rusk and Bundy. Goodwin would leave the White House in the fall of 1965, as the domestic affairs would come to a standstill, but he would return to draft 1966 SOTU as the President grew unsatisfied with Moyers’s progress on the speech.

Writing in general was *a shared enterprise* in the Johnson White House. And the composition of the programmatic SOTU involved a lot of cooperative effort of numerous policy advisers, coordinators and the principal and assistant speechwriters. Richard Goodwin would write on domestic policy and work closely with Moyers and Bundy, or later Walt Rostow on foreign affairs. Douglass Cater provided health and education policy input. Under Johnson, a “shallow hierarchical structure for writing” started to emerge, however, with Valenti as a principal coordinator of writers. Valenti, Goodwin and others enjoyed close access to the President which permitted them to know “the President mind.”¹²⁹ And as Goodwin noted,

The two roles—writer and policy-maker—were symbiotic: Active [presidential] participation made accurate articulation likely; personal contact with the President made it far easier to ensure that his public statements reflected his thoughts and philosophy, the natural cadences of his voice, and his distinctive mannerism of expression.¹³⁰

Under President Johnson initial talks on the State of the Union usually took place in August and September, which was much earlier than under his predecessor.¹³¹ Initially, the work on the Address was divided between Joe Califano and Jack Valenti who coordinated the work on the domestic and foreign policy sections, respectively. It was thus Jack Valenti, rather than Richard Goodwin,

128. Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts*, 162.

129. Hunt and Walcott, “Policymakers and Wordsmiths,” 470.

130. *Ibid.*, 470–71.

131. Memo, Jack Valenti to the President, November 27, 1965, “Foreign Policy Section of the State of the Union.” Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Foreign Policy Section, etc. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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that urged the planning the 1966 State of the Union in an early November '65 memorandum to the President.¹³² Valenti's coordinating function also involved in depth examinations of possible outlines and proposals for the State of the Union and keeping Califano and Bill Moyers advised. Around mid-November 1965, Special Assistant to the President, Joseph A. Califano Jr. requested, on behalf of the President, ideas, thoughts as to the theme of the SOTU, specific items, or programs that should be included in the President's Address. Jack Valenti was responsible for coordinating "the assembly of ideas and material," of the foreign policy section of the State of the Union and updating the President on the progress of work on that section.¹³³ Bill Moyers became domestic policy coordinator who also played a major role in the development of the Great Society program and the '65 SOTU. As the speech developed, Moyers would also vigorously edit drafts and contribute additions.¹³⁴ Material solicited for that SOTU accumulated in the White House with Bill Moyers or Joe Califano. Departments sent drafts or passages on a particular area of responsibility, or long descriptions of the departments' activities and goals.¹³⁵ The procedure for submitting proposals was that along with the material sent to Special Assistant Joe Califano, the Bureau of the Budget would receive a brief description of any legislative proposals in support of the State of the Union.¹³⁶

132. Memo, Jack Valenti to the President, November 8, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Memos—Miscellaneous. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

133. Memo, Jack Valenti to the President, November 27, 1965, "Foreign Policy Section of the State of the Union." Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Foreign Policy Section, etc. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

134. Remarks of the President, State of the Union Message, Master copy, President's copy, January 4, folder 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder VIII) The State of the Union Message," Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

135. Memo, Orville L. Freeman to Bill Moyers, "State of the Union Message," December 16, 1964. folder 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder VIII) The State of the Union Message," Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

136. Memo, President to the Heads of Government Agencies and Departments, draft, November 3, 1965, 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Input requested

The ground rules for Cabinet meetings were that Walt Rostow, National Security Assistant, would begin the briefing by introducing the aspects of the SOTU that were to be discussed and each Secretary concerned with the range of issues under discussion would briefly talk on the substance of those portions of the Address for which they and their departments bear responsibility.¹³⁷ Walt Rostow and Secretaries Rusk, McNamara and Fowler would then address themselves to the foreign policy, balance of payments and defense sections of the SOTU, after which Joe Califano would take over with the Cabinet Secretaries on the domestic section. The drafts or passages on a particular area of responsibility were provided by the departments. President Johnson requested the heads of agencies and departments to consider legislative or other proposals that could be submitted to the consideration of the incoming session of Congress and to the State of the Union Address. The President asked these units to “help in developing and perfecting programs which [will] would continue [our] Nation on the paths that we have traveled together during past months and years,” and deliver a draft material relating to the area of responsibility of each respective unit that could be included in the Address.¹³⁸ The solicited material started to accumulate in the White House with Bill Moyers between November 2 and mid-December 1964.¹³⁹ The heads of agencies and departments would participate in preliminary discussion of legislation with the White House staff.

Johnson was familiar already with the rough, unedited, and lengthy first

by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

137. Points in the State of the Union. Folder: State of the Union. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. Office Files of Joseph A. Califano, Box 71. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

138. Memo, President to the Heads of Government Agencies and Departments, draft, November 3, 1965, 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

139. Memo, Orville L. Freeman to Bill Moyers, “State of the Union Message,” December 16, 1964. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder VIII)The State of the Union Message,” Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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draft already.¹⁴⁰ Because the initial Great Society proposals were laid out in the 1965 SOTU, it is worth mentioning that what eventually evolved into the nine-point national agenda toward the Great Society, was initially an eight-point agenda of different priorities, including a proposal of the doubling the US war on poverty (instead of a program in education to ensure every American child the fullest development of his mind and skills); a program to develop entire regions of our country now sunk in distress and depression (instead of a proposal to attack crippling and killing diseases); a proposal to amend the United States Constitution to ensure every American the right to choose those who govern him (instead of a proposal to launch a national effort to make the American city a better and a more stimulating place to live); an educative program to ensure every American child the fullest development of his mind and skills (instead of a proposal to carry out a new program to develop regions of our country that are now suffering from distress and depression); and instead of a proposal to eliminate obstacles to the right and the opportunity to vote, the draft proposed to restore the beauty of the land we live in and end the poisoning of our land, our rivers and the air we breath.¹⁴¹ The idea to change the phrasing of the agenda so that it was “less arrogant,” namely, instead of “I propose to amend the Constitution” to “I propose we launch, build, etc.” was Busby’s.¹⁴² The phrasing of the President’s expression of special affection for Latin America: “I have always felt—and my country has always felt,” was also contributed by Busby.¹⁴³ Compared with the final version of the Address, the President’s national agenda and proposals that eventually constituted the heart of the 1965 SOTU were initially included in

140. Memo, MF to the President, December 31, 1964. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder IV). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

141. Memo, Bill Moyers to Mr. Valenti, January 2, 1965, Statements of LBJ, 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder II). Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library

142. Eventually the phrasing was changed to the effect that “I propose that we...”

143. Memo, Mr Goodwin to Mr Busby for the President. “State of the Union Draft 3,” Jan. 1, 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder IV). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library

the beginning of Goodwin's first draft. The sections that follow President's agenda in the final version, at best, only slightly resemble the language and the progression of ideas that Goodwin presented in his draft.¹⁴⁴ Once ideas were put into a rough draft by Goodwin, Bill Moyers would ask a group of insiders to comment directly on the draft sections, rather than the whole draft, and suggest specific language for any change.¹⁴⁵ Horace Busby, Special Assistant to the President and Secretary of the Cabinet was among the few individuals who had early access to the whole draft of the 1965 *SOU*. The draft was broken into two sections: domestic and foreign, of roughly equal lengths. Of interest is the section on Vietnam, which assured the South Vietnamese that Americans would not resign and retreat. This statement was never included in the final text because Bill Moyers struck out that pledge and substituted it with "What is at stake is the cause of freedom and in that cause America will never be found wanting."¹⁴⁶

Although Goodwin was no wordsmith and considered himself an idea man, policy experts and not the speechwriter would provide the area-specific content for the speech. Goodwin would incorporate their input and add his conclusions and the opening of the speech. He would leave the length of the early drafts a little high so that different departments would do their own cutting. His goal, however, was not to exceed 3,000 words—the length the President wanted.¹⁴⁷ As drafts developed, relevant draft sections were

144. Memo, Goodwin to the President/ LBJ Ranch, "Comment from Bob McNamara on the State of the Union," January 1965, Statements ..., Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder II). Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

145. Memo, "The State of the Union Message," Chester Bowles to the President, December 24, 1964. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder II). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, December 18, 1964–January 4, 1965, Box 135. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

146. Draft #2, Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder IV). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library

147. Memo, Goodwin to the President/ LBJ Ranch, "Comment from Bob McNamara on the State of the Union," January 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder II). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, December 18, 1964–January 4, 1965, Box 135. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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again distributed among the selected Secretaries.¹⁴⁸ Their comments on the drafts were minor and not necessarily substantial, or included in the new draft.¹⁴⁹ The wording of some passages can, however, be traced to Secretary Udall, Douglass Cater and Horace Busby.¹⁵⁰ Changes on the 1965 SOTU were introduced to the last moment.¹⁵¹

148. See for instance: Undated Draft of the State of the Union Message (Celebrezze’s copy). Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder V). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

Memo, “State of the Union Message,” Anthony Joseph Celebrezze to Bill Moyers, January 2, 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (Folder III). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson December 18, 1964–January 4, 1965, Box 135. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

149. See, for instance, Secretary Celebrezze’s comments, Draft, undated draft of the State of the Union Message. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder V). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136, D2, 0421. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

Memo, “State of the Union, and Legislative Program,” W. Willard Wirtz to the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, December 18, 1964—January 4, 1965, Box 135. Folder “1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Message (folder III).” Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

Of note, however, is Elmer B. Staats’ (Deputy Director of the Bureau of the Budget) concern referring to the President’s proposal included in the third draft, to create a National Foundation on the Arts. This proposal, Staats’ opined, may have raised people’s questions about creating something similar for the humanities. Particularly as the President, Staats reminded, offered to support a National Foundation for the Humanities, in his remarks before Brown University convocation. Eventually, President Johnson called for the creation of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities on March, 1965, in a separate Statement by the President. See Memo, Elmer B. Staats to Bill Moyers, January 2, 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder IV). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

150. The language on conservation is Udall’s. See Memo, Stewart L. Udall to Bill Moyers, January 2, 1965, Statements of LBJ, 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder II). Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

See also Douglass Cater’s comments, Cater’s Draft, Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder IV). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 4, 1965, Box 136. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. Cater added the word “only” three times in the famous passage: “The Great Society asks not only how much, but how good; not only how to create wealth but how to use it; not only how fast we are going, but where we are headed.” The first use of “only” in the passage did not make it to the Address.

151. Bureau of the Budget Route Slip, Kermit Gordon to Bill Moyers, January 4, 1965. Folder: Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (Folder III). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson December 18, 1964–January 4, 1965, Box 135. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

Importantly, throughout the Johnson presidency, the departments were asked to consider legislation that the President could submit to Congress and cooperated with the White House staff.¹⁵² Although the President routinely sought departmental submissions for the inclusion in his SOTU, most of them never found their way to the Address. Often the vision for the structure and theme of the SOTU, rather than governmental materials, dictated the content. In some cases, agencies would prefer the President to address an issue that they recommend in a separate special message to give it more weight.¹⁵³ Some of the recommendations submitted by departments or agencies were “of so minor importance, or are so technical in nature that reference to them in the State of the Union would not seem appropriate,” or “suitable for the purposes of the State of the Union Address.”¹⁵⁴ Although the President no longer presented a rundown of departmental reports to Congress, the annual process of providing submissions, urged the entire federal bureaucracy to action: to establish goals and priorities, lay out plans and present achievements.

President Johnson’s Chief of Staff Marvin Watson was also involved in the 1966 SOTU. Watson stayed with the President at the Ranch and sent Valenti an outline of the State of the Union. The outline indicated that the foreign policy section was to be longer than the domestic section to show that it was more important.¹⁵⁵ Valenti expected to have the “unfiltered and unedited” document with new ideas from the State Department in his hands, after Walt Rostow

152. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Subject Categories Derived from Replies to the President’s November 3, Request for material from all agencies, Folder II. Folder: Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 1, 1967–January 10, 1967. Box 224. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

153. Walter N. Tobriner to Joe Califano, November 26, 1965, 1/12/66 Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

154. Charles A. Webb (Interstate Commerce Commission) to Joe Califano, November 24, 1965 1/12/66 Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

Ross D. Davis to Mr. Califano, November 22, 1965, 1/12/65 Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

155. Marvin Watson to Jack Valenti, November 15, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Foreign Policy Section. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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“canvassed desk-by-desk and bureau-by-bureau the entire State Department for new ideas, new suggestions.” The foreign affairs portion was to be meshed with the domestic section the work on which was coordinated by Joe Califano. Only then Goodwin could start working on the first draft of the Address. Ideas and themes for Johnson’s 1966 SOTU originated with the task force consisting of the President’s policy advisers, including Walt Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, Clark Clifford, supported by John Kenneth Galbraith, Walter Heller, Dean Acheson, George Woods, Arthur Dean, Norman Cousins, Richard Neustadt, Garner Ackley and Chief Justice Abe Fortas.¹⁵⁶

The plan was that once the task force has gathered ideas, facts, and possible themes, it would present the plan to the President as compactly as possible, then call on the own stable of writers to construct a first draft whose only service would be to let the President see how the ideas and themes could be fitted together in a literary frame. This approach would allow the speechwriter to spend his writing time efficiently and allow the President to have additional time for searching scrutiny on the final draft.¹⁵⁷

While under JFK Ted Sorensen would allow a week for material submissions, President Johnson allowed up to three weeks for departmental input to be submitted to his Special Assistant Califano. Johnson also wanted that the Bureau of the Budget received a brief description of any legislative proposal in support of the material sent to Califano.¹⁵⁸

Like Kennedy, Johnson too, would consult with people outside the government, including Professor Richard Neustadt or Norman Cousins, who, as

156. Draft, 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Changes made by President Johnson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, Justice Fortas and Clark Clifford. January 12, 1966. Box 173. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. See also: Draft, December 13, 1965. “1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.” Walt Rostow Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

157. Ibid.

158. Memo, the President to the Heads of Departments and Agencies, November 15, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Foreign Affairs. Heads of Departments and Agencies. Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

Valenti noted, was “a sane, respected liberal and intellectual.”¹⁵⁹ The President was systematically updated by his coordinators on the progress of the Address. Henry Owen coordinated efforts to clear out the State Department bureaus for raw and basic ideas, bearing in mind the President’s directive “to leave politics of any question to him.” The President wanted ideas, not objections. Owen’s assignment was to act as “filter” for all departmental ideas, check them with Undersecretary of State George Ball, and add his comments without eliminating any raw idea. Comprehensive results and specifics were to be sent to Bundy and Valenti. Johnson’s 1966 SOTU was to be an important foreign policy statement, with 75 percent of the SOTU length would be devoted to foreign policy and 25 percent to domestic issues. The Foreign Policy message needed an umbrella theme that would be a counterpart of the Great Society idea and image, and that would provide the press throughout the world with a meaningful and convenient “handle” for summarizing President’s foreign policy intent. The theme, Valenti argued, should help project President Johnson as striding vigorously onto the world scene.¹⁶⁰

The first preliminary cut at the foreign policy portion of the SOTU emerged from the State Department.¹⁶¹ The President was asked to “read it over and note what strikes [him] as deserving more staff work and study. Meanwhile each idea that has been suggested is being given a quick staff-out, and a one page-brief is being prepared on each one.”¹⁶² Two alternatives of the ’66 SOTU

159. Norman Cousins Draft, December 7, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. Box 171. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

160. Minutes, Charles M. McGuire to Valenti, November 13, 1965, “Meeting on the Foreign Policy Section, the State of the Union Message. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Foreign Policy Section. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

161. Memo to the President. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Memorandums, etc. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

162. Memo, Jack Valenti to Joe Califano, Tuesday, December 7, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Foreign Affairs. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. The foreign policy section of the SOTU was enclosed to the cable addressed to the President. The cable was attached to the Valenti-Califano memorandum of December 7.

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were proposed to the President: the usual kind with a domestic portion and a foreign portion, and a summary of views. Or, a shorter message, in which his “philosophy and the direction of the US domestically and abroad could be stated—with the rhetoric aimed at describing the kind of world this nation would choose to be a part of and without stating the usual long list of specific actions to be taken in the domestic and foreign field.”¹⁶³ The advantage of the latter alternative would be that the President would stir viewers and listeners by outlining a “grand design” in a briefer time than usual; the message would not be a laundry list (laundry list messages would be sent to Congress later); President could seize world opinion and bend it to his course.

Walt Rostow was the major force behind the development of the foreign policy section of that Address. Rostow suggested that four objectives that guided the work on that section should be retained, and these were: “to bring this Administration and its foreign policy onto the world scene with a distinctive rationale. To formulate our foreign policy in terms of the same principles that govern the Great Society program: welfare and the creation of consensus. Third, to launch a series of new initiatives in terms of this policy, which would not significantly burden the Federal budget. Fourth, to pitch our action in foreign policy towards the kind of world we want to have in the 1970s.”¹⁶⁴ The five-page draft of the foreign policy section bears corrections written in longhand. As the letter (*L*) in the upper right-hand corner of the memo suggests, these edits were most likely made by LBJ. The President square bracketed each of the four objectives, as though stressing their importance.¹⁶⁵ In the course of collecting “Ideas for the Inclusion in the State of the Union Message” also other individuals contributed their own foreign policy drafts, whose major topic was Vietnam, including: Norman

163. Memo to the President. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Memorandums, etc. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

164. Memorandum for the President. December 13, 1965. “1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.” Walt Rostow Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

165. *Ibid.*

Cousins, John Kenneth Galbraith, Richard Neustadt, and Dean Acheson.¹⁶⁶ Upon the President's request, Valenti was to give Cousins' draft to Rostow and Bundy, and let them work on it.¹⁶⁷

The President also saw Galbraith's draft on the US involvement in Vietnam.¹⁶⁸ Valenti considered it very important that they pinpointed in one sentence the reasons for American presence in Vietnam. As the memo reveals, the Johnson Administration did not know why they were in Vietnam, or at least they did not know how to explain it to the American people. "As I look back over speeches and written statements on 'this reason why,'" Valenti wrote, "there never seems to be a simple, understandable, conscience answer. It seems to me that we ought to be able to capsule this and then say it over and over again ... so that everyone understands and nobody mistakes our commitment." Valenti suggested a statement, which he thought may not be entirely accurate: "If we allow Communists to take over South Vietnam by brute force, then no country in the world will ever be safe again—this is why we are in Vietnam."¹⁶⁹ This statement never made it to Johnson's '66 SORU, however.

During the SORU process, Richard Goodwin communicated with the President directly and explained his considerations behind the original order of the thought in the speech.¹⁷⁰ In Goodwin's judgment, everyone would be waiting

166. Draft, December 13, 1965. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Walt Rostow Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

167. Memo, President to Jack Valenti. December 9, 1965. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, Norman Cousins Draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. Box 171. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Rostow's comments on Cousins' drafts, see: "1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union." Walt Rostow Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

168. Memo, Kenneth Galbraith to the President, Undated, 1/12/66 Annual Message on the State of the Union, Kenneth Galbraith drafts. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

169. Jack Valenti to McGeorge Bundy, January 7, 1966. 10.45, Friday. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, Vietnam. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson 1/12/66. Box 171. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

170. Memo, Richard Goodwin to the President, undated. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Dick Goodwin Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 12, 1966, Box 171. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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for Vietnam and that the President would lose by suspense. The domestic and foreign policy discussions would have lost an enormous amount of impact because people were restlessly waiting for Vietnam, especially Americans. Because of their concern about the war, they would not be so interested in Johnson’s other programs. Goodwin reasoned that when the President would have finally got to Vietnam, “some of the edge of eagerness may well have been dulled, rather than increased.” Thus he urged the President to talk about Vietnam first, which would have got “maximum impact from Vietnam and maximum impact from domestic affairs—perhaps increased by the relief” that the President had not announced a major increase in war. Otherwise, Goodwin argued, the President would get a doubtful increase in his Vietnam impact and less impact on the other sections.¹⁷¹ Eventually, Johnson’s 1966 SOTU opened with domestic affairs.

Although Goodwin was the chief drafter of the 1966 SOTU, the final draft retained the language proposed by the State Department and the Council of Economic Advisers.¹⁷² Changes and additions to the speech were suggested until the last minute.¹⁷³ Some thirty-six hours before the President delivered his 1966 SOTU, Chief Justice Abe Fortas was still making changes on the latest draft of the President’s speech.¹⁷⁴ On the morning of January 12, the day the speech was scheduled to be delivered, Bill Moyers had to inform the Press that he could not brief them because the President was still working on the speech.¹⁷⁵

171. Memorandum, Richard Goodwin to the President, undated. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Dick Goodwin Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 12, 1966, Box 171. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

172. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Changes made by President Johnson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, Justice Fortas and Clark Clifford. January 12, 1966. Box 173. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

173. Memo to the President, January 10, 1966. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

174. Draft, “1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union.” Draft 1/11/66 8:00 P.M. – Abe Fortas. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

175. News Conference with Bill Moyers at the White House, Wednesday, January 12, 1966, 11:03 A.M. EST Appointment File [Diary Backup], January 14, 1969—Papers of Lyndon

Bob Hardesty and Will Sparks: “clarifying sentences,” “eliminating jargon”

The growing demand for speeches under LBJ led to the growth of the speechwriting structure. In late 1965 Valenti hired a ghostwriter for the US Postmaster General Bob Hardesty along with Will Sparks, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s writer, who added a new level of hierarchy at the bottom of the speechwriting operation. Their addition would be a turning point for presidential speechwriters. As Robert Schlesinger argues, the Johnson White House would employ specialized speechcrafters who would also affect policy more than in many succeeding Administrations.¹⁷⁶ On Jack Valenti’s suggestion, Sparks and Hardesty were asked to prepare a prose for the first draft of Johnson’s ’66 SOTU. Hardesty and Sparks would not be the chief writers of Johnson’s State of the Union, however. They were not aides and had no policy responsibilities.¹⁷⁷ Valenti believed that it would be beneficial to have Goodwin in on the final drafting.¹⁷⁸ Evidence shows that the formulation of legislative proposals for Congress would not be their responsibility. In their draft of the foreign policy section, Sparks and Hardesty left a gap in the draft with a note that clearly indicates that “[h]ere the President presents his specific proposals for the coming year. These statements should be kept as brief as possible as they will be followed by specific messages at a later date.”¹⁷⁹

Will Sparks and Bob Hardesty drafted a prologue to the ’66 message on November 30 on the assumption that foreign policy will be the emphasis of next year’s message.¹⁸⁰ Their “first cut at the prose and theme of the State

Baines Johnson, President, 1963–1969. Box 27. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

176. Schlesinger, *White House Ghosts*, 165.

177. Marvin Watson to Jack Valenti, November 15, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Foreign Policy Section. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

178. Memo, Jack Valenti to the President, December 9, 1965. Folder: 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Foreign Policy Section, etc. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

179. Draft, 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Sparks/Hardesty Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

180. *Ibid.*

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of the Union Message,” was dated December 26. Although the prose of the draft was Hardesty’s, Sparks’ and Valenti’s, Walt Rostow, Henry Owen, Kenneth Galbraith, Dean Acheson, Norman Cousins, Richard Neustadt, and George Woods were the brains and spirits behind that draft. No substantial language suggested by Hardesty and Sparks for Johnson’s ’66 SOTU could be traced in the final version of the Address.¹⁸¹ Hardesty and Sparks did not communicate directly with the President in the process of drafting ’66 SOTU. Rather, they sent their drafts to Jack Valenti, who coordinated foreign policy material and supervised the distribution of copies along with Douglass Cater. After Valenti, Busby and Goodwin left the White House, the State of the Union speechwriting operation was ran by Bill Moyers.¹⁸² Bob Hardesty and Will Sparks would continue drafting speeches for a while and soon Hardesty would leave speechwriting. The preparation of the SOTU, however, remained “a night and day operation.”¹⁸³ In terms of speechwriting, Will Sparks admitted that to write “a report to the Congress on the country’s condition, with recommendations for improving it during the coming year,” was the easiest part to write—and the hardest “to avoid being swamped by.” It was the easiest part to write because “99 percent of the raw material supplied

181. Memo, Sparks and Hardesty to Jack Valenti. December 17, 1965. Sparks/ Hardesty Drafts. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

182. Hult and Walcott, “Policymakers and wordsmiths,” 472. Hult and Walcott claim that as a result of the departure of Valenti, Busby and Goodwin, LBJ added a new level of the speechwriting hierarchy. Robert Kintner a former NBS news head replaced Busby as Cabinet Secretary and was now in control of the speechwriting operation. Kintner’s responsibilities were not clearly defined. He would not write or edit speeches. Rather, assisted by Charles Maguire, Kintner would coordinate the speechwriting assignments of the President’s senior adviser/writers—McPherson, Rostow and Cater. As well as the growing group of specialized writers and a separate staff writing minor presidential messages. In 1967 Kintner would be responsible for overseeing the merge of the speech and message units and the creation of a separate staff of researchers. In essence, Kintner’s organizational changes resulted in separating the senior advisers/writers who dealt with policy issues from wordsmiths who did not. Kintner, being the head of the latter group coordinated the work of all speechwriting efforts, blurring the organizational distinction. By the end of 1966 also Moyers would leave the White House, and so did Kintner in the summer of 1967.

183. Memo, Bill Moyers to the President. December 19, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—For and from the President. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

is invariably of this nature; it is dangerous because the President, himself, is easily swallowed up by the avalanche and the end result would do credit to Calvin Coolidge.”¹⁸⁴ Acting as the spokesman of the American people, or what Neustadt called—the Chief Clerk of the Government, the President was expected to support and defend the various programs and proposals of the Cabinet departments, the agencies, and his senior advisers. Ideas for Johnson’s 1967 Address poured from many sources, including university professors.¹⁸⁵ Califano and Moyers also met with the entire staff to generate ideas for the message. The routine material was requested by the President in his November 3 Memorandum to the Heads of Agencies and Departments. Bill Moyers set up a Committee to prepare the State of the Union Address. The Committee consisted of Harry McPherson, Charles Roche, Douglass Cater, Hayes Redmon, Bob Hardesty, Will Sparks, and Moyers’ deputy, Ben Wattenberg.¹⁸⁶ Although incomplete, the official minute from the first meeting called by Moyers to discuss the 1967 SOTU gives a closer look at the conceptual stage of the SOTU process. Bill Moyers suggested that in considering the State of the Union, the Committee should take into account a number of problems facing the country and these included: Vietnam, lack of money to finance the Great Society, deep psychological and social problems such as Civil Rights, restless youth, quality of American cities, and quality of life in suburbs; and that the SOTU must reflect the President’s views on these problems now and as he looks to the future. The President wanted his message to look as follows: national defense, foreign policy, domestic section, and personal philosophy.¹⁸⁷ In terms of Will Sparks’ role in the SOTU process, Sparks met

184. Will Sparks to December 5, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Will Sparks. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

185. Memo, Bill Moyers to the President. December 19, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—For and from the President. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

186. Robert E. Kintner to Charles Maguire, December 8, 1966. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

187. Memo, Will Sparks to Dorothy Territo, December 6, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Will Sparks. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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with McNamara and Secretary Cyrus R. Vance to discuss the content of the Address and drafted sections on Vietnam and national defense that contained points stressed by Robert McNamara.¹⁸⁸

The material assembled by Moyers awaited decisions on the budget, the economy, defense questions, and the domestic program, which Joe Califano was getting in shape for presentation to the President¹⁸⁹ On December 23 the very rough, first draft was finished.¹⁹⁰ Following Christmas '66, Sparks submitted numerous and lengthy additions to the first draft upon the request of Bill Moyers. These additions, however, devoted too much verbiage to philosophical treatment of domestic values and did not survive to the final draft of the '66 SOTU. At that stage, the draft did not resemble a document appropriate for a solemn state occasion. It was weaved with linguistic embroidery.¹⁹¹ Walt Rostow thought that given the degree of public concern about Vietnam, the Vietnam passage was too short and general. Yet on the other hand an expanded Vietnam section would have destroyed the valuable balanced picture of the President's over-all foreign policy with its linkage to the same principles that governed the domestic policy. Rostow suggested that the President indicated in his State of the Union that he would have either filed or delivered a special message on Vietnam in person. Johnson liked the idea of a separate and exhaustive message on Vietnam and authorized its drafting.¹⁹²

The complete draft of Johnson's 1967 SOTU ensued on January 9. The

188. Memo, Will Sparks to Bill Moyers “Defense Portion of the State of the Union.” December 9, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Will Sparks. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

189. Memo, Bill Moyers to the President. December 19, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—For and from the President. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

190. Memo, Bill Moyers to the President. December 23, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—For and from the President. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

191. Memo, Will Sparks to Bill Moyers, “State of the Union.” December 26, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Will Sparks. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

192. Memo, Rostow to the President, December 30, 1966. National Security File, Speech File. State of the Union Message 1966–1967 [1 of 2]. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

weakness of the draft was that it included too much economy and budget, no smashing new peace proposals, nothing about the bombing of North Vietnam.¹⁹³ There were lacunae in the sections on 1967 and 1968 budget expenditures and deficit. After Secretaries McNamara, Fowler, Wirtz, Connor, Director Schultze, Chairman Ackley, and Clark Clifford reviewed the fiscal situation, they proposed a surtax of six percent on both individual and corporate income taxes to help deal with the war in Vietnam. The language of that proposal included in the message is theirs. The proposal anticipated that the six-percent surcharge would last for at least one year, not two years as it was eventually proposed.¹⁹⁴

Sparks' input to the third draft of the Address sent to Bill Moyers concentrated on "clarifying sentences, eliminating some of the technical jargon that "inevitably crept in," and trying to make some of the lines a little easier to say. By the time the third draft was created, the section proposed by McNamara for the first draft, concerning the leveling off the military buildup in Vietnam was eliminated. This, Sparks thought, left the Vietnam section with "much rhetoric but few facts" and encouraged Moyers to put in back unless there had been some "overriding policy considerations to the contrary."¹⁹⁵ Despite Will Sparks' minor role as a speechwriter in the '67 SOTU process, there is evidence that he tried to influence the foreign policy debate by urging American withdrawal from Vietnam without waiting for military success. Having spent some time in Vietnam as a private citizen, Sparks argued that Americans should get out of Vietnam because they were "morally wrong and that they were making a strategic mistake. Perhaps with the only exception of World War I, Vietnam differed from most of foreign conflicts in which the US

193. Bill Moyers to the President January 9, 1967. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—For and from the President. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

194. Secretary McNamara, Secretary Fowler, Secretary Wirtz, Secretary Connor, Director Schultze, Chairman Ackley, Clark Clifford, Joe Califano to the President. January 9, 1967. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Memorandums—For and from the President. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

195. Memo, Will Sparks to Bill Moyers "Defense Portion of the State of the Union." January 9, 1966. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Will Sparks. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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got involved. The difference was that in the case of the Vietnam War there was “no significant body of American opinion,” which would call “for an indefinite U. S. presence in Vietnam.”¹⁹⁶ In the end, only insignificant traces of Sparks language included in the third draft can be discerned in the final copy.

Harry McPherson: “a disaster ... I came the nearest to having an ulcer”¹⁹⁷

After Valenti, Busby, Goodwin, and Moyers left the White House between mid-1965 and late 1966, in the summer of 1966 a lawyer, Harry McPherson, entered the speechwriting process and would run the speechwriting operation in the last years of the Johnson Administration.¹⁹⁸ In the last years of the Johnson presidency, too many people became involved in drafting the SOTU. The process became longer and longer, requiring numerous drafts and redrafts before the actual speech was developed. As the principal drafter of the 1968 SOTU, Harry McPherson admitted that the Address was the worst experience he had ever been through, “a disaster and I came the nearest to having an ulcer, I think, that I’ve ever had over any speech.”¹⁹⁹

Every State of the Union usually involves some kind of collegiate effort, but ultimately, the decision whether a speech would stress philosophy as opposed to programs rested with the President. For McPherson working on the State of the Union involved a very close working relationship with Joe Califano, who was responsible for providing the new material for the speech and producing the legislative program for the President. While the shape of the speech and its philosophy was McPherson’s, the things that “make the headlines—‘The President proposes so-and-so’ that’s Califano’s legislative

196. Memo, Will Sparks to Bill Moyers, “The Vietnam Debate,” January 5, 1967. 1/10/67 State of the Union Message. Will Sparks. Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, January 10, 1967. Box 226. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

197. Transcript, Harry McPherson Oral History Interview III, 1/16/69, by T. H. Baker, Internet Copy, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library: 8, retrieved on February 13, 2008 from http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/search/Oral_History/oh_search.html.

198. *Ibid.*, 7.

199. *Ibid.*, 8.

operation.”²⁰⁰ McPherson may have offered the President his general vision of what the speech should be, but “all of it gets changed and turned around by the President’s own desires.” The vision sticks, unless the President is willing to go along with it. When McPherson was responsible for the speechwriting operation, he did not aim to put a speech in “Johnsonese.” His goal was to avoid passionate language and “simplify speeches substantially and to reduce their rhetoric,” something contrary to what he thought was one of the most troublesome things about the Johnson presidency in 1963, 1964, and 1965. The exuberant rhetorical tendency, in McPherson’s opinion, was not really Johnson’s, but Goodwin’s, and Moyers’.²⁰¹

Walt Rostow provided foreign policy drafts throughout the Johnson presidency.²⁰² A normal method describable of speech preparation during the time Rostow was around varied a great deal. On certain speeches “you’d start out, and he wouldn’t like a draft, and then he’d try somebody else’s first draft, and he would feel his way, and it would be a sort of multiple draft problem in which he’d gradually come down and lock on.”²⁰³ The President’s regular speech writers off the domestic side in the latter half of the Administration, including Harry McPherson, would come to Walt Rostow and Rostow would outline what he thought would be useful foreign policy material. Sometimes a State of the Union foreign policy draft would be given to McPherson. As Rostow noted, “it was relatively rare for major speeches that my drafts as written or first drafted, were the final draft.” Rostow considered it a great asset that he had “no ego attachment to drafting in government ... because it’s an awful pain, if your ego is tied up with drafts, to see what happens to them.”²⁰⁴

200. Ibid.

201. Ibid., 10.

202. Draft, 2nd Draft, December 11, 1967 State of the Union Message, Foreign Policy Section, W. W. Rostow. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 2 McPherson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

203. Transcript, Walt W. Rostow Oral History Interview I, 3/21/69, by Paige E. Mulhollan, Internet Copy, LBJ Library, retrieved on April 5, 2008 from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/ROSTOW/rostow.asp>, 8.

204. Ibid.

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In drafting the President’s 1968 SOTU, McPherson was assisted by Deputy Special Counsel to the President, Lawrence Levinson, and Ervin Duggan, a speech writer and communications expert. Larry Levinson co-drafted the domestic section with Ervin Duggan.²⁰⁵ Harry McPherson was working on incorporating that section to the Address.²⁰⁶ Assisted by the Appointments Secretary Jim Jones, McPherson would then seek presidential permission to meet with Joe Califano, Charles Schultze, Clark Clifford, Justice Fortas, “and that kind of group to hone the wording” if the President had liked the general draft.²⁰⁷ Once the second draft was ready, McPherson would again distribute copies to Clark Clifford and Walt Rostow.²⁰⁸ The second draft included numerous and important changes suggested by Jim Rowe, Abe Fortas, as well as new language for the domestic section drafted by Duggan and Levinson. Walt Rostow cooperated with Secretary Rusk on the foreign affairs section of the SOTU and transferred Rusk’s ideas and thoughts on the San Antonio formula for the third draft of the ’68 SOTU.²⁰⁹ Rusk and Rostow opted for a “tight” negotiation section that would state nothing that would not have already been said by an Administration spokesman. McPherson and Clifford wanted the President to convey the thought that “We do not want to quibble over words. Stopping the war is too urgent for that,” and that the US would stop military activity, sit and talk, if the enemy did agree to a cessation of such activity and lived up to the agreement.²¹⁰

205. Draft, Rough No. 1 Draft, January 10, 1968 Duggan/Levinson. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 1 Duggan/Levinson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

206. Note, Larry Levinson to Doug Cater, January 11, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 1 Duggan/Levinson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

207. Note, Jim Jones to the President, January 9, 1968 “Draft no. 1”. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 1 McPherson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

208. Note, Harry McPherson to Ruth Shumm, January 12, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 2 McPherson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

209. Memo, W. W. Rostow to the President, January 12, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 3 McPherson/Roche. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 17, 1968. Box 261. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

210. Memo, Harry McPherson to the President, January 13, 1968. Lyndon B. Johnson Presi-

As the President was very concerned with San Antonio formula as basis for negotiations with Hanoi, he asked to restate that formula in McPherson's fourth draft.²¹¹ Johnson advised to check this section as rewritten with George Reedy. Specifically, Jones asked George Reedy to check the proposal for accuracy and policy with anyone from the State Department; Reedy spent "a sleepless night worrying about this passage. The language I saw yesterday still kept us behind the 8-ball, on the defensive. It looked like we were stalling. We must take the offensive and I think language like I proposed will do it."²¹² He pointed out, though, that it should be checked with both McPherson and Rostow to determine the attitude of Hanoi that he might not have been aware of and which could make his proposal infeasible. An improved language on the San Antonio formula as basis for peace talks provided by Walt Rostow is discernible in the final version of the Address.²¹³ Also, Larry Levinson's contribution on consumer action was included in the Address after small changes.²¹⁴ Matthew Nimetz, a staff assistant to President Johnson and a former law clerk to Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan, contributed section on additional US attorneys.

It was not until Draft #7 that selected words are underlined and phrases are separated with a slash, most likely to improve the President's reading.²¹⁵ Draft #8 was a blending of the draft from January 14 and 15, and "picks up

dential Library.

211. Memo, Jones to Harry McPherson, January 14, 1968, 1:45 A.M. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 4. McPherson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 17, 1968. Box 261. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

212. Memo, James R. Jones to W. Marvin Watson, January 15, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968 Memorandum 12/02/66-1/17/68. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

213. Note, W. W. Rostow to the President, January 15, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 6. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 261. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

214. Larry Levinson, Consumer, 1/16/68. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968, State of Union Material from Conference Table During Day 1/17/68. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969. Box 263. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

215. Draft no. 7, January 15, 1968, 2:05 A.M. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 7. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 261. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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the best of both.” McPherson and Califano wanted to have the President’s comments early enough that night, January 15, to incorporate them in the next draft that would be reviewed the following day with the Cabinet officers.²¹⁶ The draft represented edits and cuts made by Jones, Christian, and Busby. Jones sent a copy to McPherson and informed him that the draft represented the President’s thinking. Draft #9 of January 15, 1968 combined two different drafts that were composed that day. Where there were differences in these drafts, the President’s choice prevailed and was reflected in the new draft. Despite the fact that Califano wanted fifteen copies so that each of the Cabinet officers, he and Larry Levinson could initial a copy, Jones decided to send one copy, which would be initialed by all Cabinet members. This, Jones reasoned, “would prevent too many copies floating around this soon.”²¹⁷ The BOB made fact checks and corrected the ninth draft, dated January 16, 1968.

In the meantime, there was as a great deal of discussion that the State of the Union message was too long.²¹⁸ McPherson sent his comments on the ninth draft to the President with suggestions for improvement and deletions. In an effort not to “turn off part of ... [President’s] audience at the outset,” McPherson encouraged to delete a paragraph in the opening section, which was “just rhetoric.”²¹⁹ Cater suggested that Harry McPherson could go over the

216. Memo, Harry McPherson and Joseph Califano to the President, January 15, 1968, 5:45 P.M. Folder: Draft no. 8, January 15, 1968. 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 8. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 262. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

217. Memo, Jim Jones to the President. January 15, 1968. 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 9 Califano/McPherson (folder 2). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 262. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

218. Memo, Robert E. Kinter to George Christian, January 16, 1967. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Memorandum 12/02/66–1/17/68. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. Both President Eisenhower and Kennedy clearly surpassed Johnson in length. Eisenhower’s Addresses ranged from 5,200 words to 9,740. Kennedy’s Addresses ranged from 6,400 to 7,000 words, which was roughly the same as LBJ’s Addresses in 1965 and 1966. The word count of LBJ’s 1964 SOTU delivered in the aftermath of Kennedy’s assassination was only 3,800 words.

219. Memo, McPherson to the President. 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 9 Califano/McPherson (folder 3). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson. January 17, 1968. Box 262. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

last draft and add no more than 400 words to tie the speech together and that he underlined new words in red so that the President could see what McPherson accomplished. In Carter's opinion, Harry McPherson knew the speech best, and already too many cooks had worked on that particular "pie"²²⁰ Hours prior to the scheduled delivery of the '68 SOTU, McPherson still communicated with the President about a possible improvement of one word that McPherson thought did not fit. Although it was just rhetoric, McPherson reasoned, it should make sense.²²¹ The new ending for the message was prepared by Ervin Duggan and Larry Levinson and included in the Address.²²² Following the State of the Union Address, the President lost his credibility. In his January 1968 SOTU the President talked about peace. Soon after, however, the Tet offensive took place. Despite the fact that Johnson had advance warning of the Tet attack, he did not tell the people that bad news was coming. "It would have been nice if Johnson had gotten in the State of the Union Message saying, "There are dark days ahead," instead of talking about seeking peace."²²³ On March 31, 1968, the President withdrew from the presidential race and announced that decision in a nationally televised address.

A little more than two months after Johnson's decision, on June 10, 1968, Walt Rostow stimulated some initial thinking on the President's 1969 SOTU.²²⁴ Joe Califano started to solicit material for the speech as early as August 26. In response to his requests, ideas for the inclusion in the State of the Union started to flow in early September. Harry McPherson was the primary speechwriter

220. Douglass Cater to the President, January 16, 1968. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

221. Memo, Harry C. McPherson Jr. to the President. January 17, 1968. 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft 1/17/68, 1:00 A.M. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 262. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

222. Memo, Califano to the President. January 16, 1968. Draft 1/17/68, 1:00 A.M. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 262. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

223. Transcript, Peter Braestrup Oral History Interview I, March 1, 1982, by Ted Gittinger, 8. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, retrieved on October 11, 2008 from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/Braestrup/Braestrup.PDF>.

224. "The Sharing of the Good Life." W. W. Rostow. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963-1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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of the 1969 State of the Union. He sent the President his idea for '69 speech around mid-December '68 and once the President accepted McPherson's idea, the final draft of the speech “didn't vary more than a hundred words ... from the first draft” that he wrote.²²⁵ The flesh of the message was already there, in the first draft.

The composition of Johnson's last SOTU, as in previous years, was a collaborative effort of the speechwriter, the President and policy experts. Passage drafts for Johnson's last SOTU provided by Walt Rostow called for a greater spirit of partnership, equality and cooperation of other nations with their neighbors for the common purpose of solving their problems for themselves.²²⁶ Secretary Rusk contributed drafts on the Middle East.²²⁷ Most of the ideas on Vietnam provided by Secretary Rusk made it to the final draft.²²⁸ McPherson also sent the first draft of the domestic section to Defense Secretary Clark Clifford as the President—who had not seen the draft himself by then—was anxious for Clifford's comments.²²⁹ By the time the subsequent draft was produced, McPherson made minor changes in pencil throughout the first draft, shortened it and improved its language. The final pages that followed were written in pencil by Harry McPherson. The content of the SOTU developed on yellow notepad pages.²³⁰ By January 6,

225. Transcript, Harry McPherson Oral History Interview III, 1/16/69, by T. H. Baker, Internet Copy, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

226. Memo, W. W. Rostow to Harry McPherson, January 6, 1969. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

227. Draft on Middle East, undated, Secretary Rusk. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

228. Draft on Viet-Nam, undated, Secretary Rusk. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

229. Memo, Harry C. McPherson to the President, January 3, 1969, 4:30 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 1st draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

230. State of the Union, 1st draft, undated. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 2nd draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969.

McPherson still considered the draft too long.²³¹ He wanted the President to decide what he wanted to keep and cut. By the following day, Rostow redrafted the foreign policy passage of the SOTU upon the President's request. A note, in McPherson's handwriting, in the upper right corner of the second draft indicates that the President saw this draft and made changes.²³² McPherson worked closely with President Johnson and shared his comments on the style of Draft #3.²³³ It was essential that the President did not seem to be "maudlin, self-serving, or overly sentimental," as "that plays into the hands of those who are prepared to think a personal appearance is meant purely for ego satisfaction. Restraint and dignity are essential."²³⁴ By the time the sixth draft ensued, the speech was intended to be delivered by the President rather than submitted to Congress.²³⁵ As in previous years, changes and improvements were still made on the day the President delivered his last SOTU.²³⁶ Importantly, the content of the SOTU was the result of negotiations and cooperation between the President, the White House staff, including

January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

231. Harry McPherson to the President, memo, 1/6/69, 11:40 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 2nd draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

232. The President's copy of the 2nd Draft, Undated. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 2nd draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

233. Memo, Harry McPherson to the President, 1/11/69, 11:00 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 3rd draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

234. *Ibid.*

235. Memo, Ruth Shumm to McPherson, January 14, 1969, 4:00 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 6th draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

236. Note, Note to McPherson, not signed, January 14, 1969, 4:00 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 6th draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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Harry McPherson, the Office of Management and Budget and individual secretaries.²³⁷

Assessment

Different Presidents and the White House staff are differently committed to writing and recording their activities. The subchapter on LBJ illustrates that most vividly. In terms of its length, the subchapter on LBJ outbalances subchapters on the other Presidents, whose speechwriting organizations are also examined in the present study. This is mainly due to the decentralization of speechwriting and coordinating responsibilities; annual or biannual changes in the position of the key presidential speechwriter, and commitment to written communication style. LBJ’s six State of the Union Addresses were drafted by four different chief speechwriters: Ted Sorensen, Bob Goodwin, Bill Moyers (assisted by a committee of several crafters, including Bob Hardesty and Will Sparks), and Harry McPherson (assisted by Lawrence Levinson and Ervin Duggan, a speechwriter and communications expert). LBJ’s 1966 SOTU, for instance, would be written by two speechwriters.

Under LBJ, the speechwriting and speech-coordinating functions would be split between several people. Johnson’s top aides Joe Califano and Jack Valenti were involved in coordinating the efforts on domestic and foreign policy sections of the SOTU. In addition, around late 1965, the speechwriting structure expanded to include two new specialized speechwriters: Will Sparks and Bob Hardesty. After Goodwin left the White House, LBJ’s 1967 SOTU

237. Memo, Harry McPherson to the President, January 10, 1969, 9:40 P.M. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 4th draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. By the time Draft #4 ensued, McPherson and Charlie Zwick, the director of the OMB, came close to what the President wanted in the budget section. Joe Califano was negotiating with Postmaster General Marvin Watson over the language of the postal reorganization.

For the discussion of the White House staff with the Secretary of Treasury, Henry Fowler with Secretaries Deming and Petty, see: Memo, Henry H. Fowler to Secretary Barr, January 11, 1969. Folder: 1/14/69 Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union 4th draft. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 14, 1969. Box 297. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

was produced by Bill Moyers with the assistance of Bob Hardesty and Will Sparks. For Moyers speechwriting was not his main occupation; he was first of all a presidential top line aide who would also help the President with his speeches. Although Hult and Walcott trace the disjunction of speechwriting and policymaking to the Johnson presidency due to the employment of specialized speechcrafters in the White House, the subchapter on LBJ demonstrates that policymakers did not cease to dominate the SOTU speechwriting process. Despite the fact that Sparks made an attempt at the State of the Union, his actual input concentrated on “clarifying sentences” and “eliminating some of the technical jargon.” Even after the employment of specialized writers, the composition of Johnson’s SOTUS remained a collaborative effort of the speechwriters, the President and policy experts. The heads of agencies and departments would participate already in the preliminary discussion of legislation with the White House staff and shape the content of Johnson’s SOTUS in cooperation with the White House staff. The brains of the SOTU drafts included Rostow, Owen, Galbraith, Acheson, Woods and Neustadt. Both Ted Sorensen and Bob Goodwin saw themselves both as policymakers and writers, and both had access to the President. The key problem with the speechwriting operations under Johnson, particularly after 1966, was that too many people were allowed to work on the project. In the last two years of the Johnson Presidency, the situation was so frustrating that Johnson’s chief speechwriter—Harry McPherson—“close to getting an ulcer.”

SPEECHWRITING UNDER PRESIDENT GERALD R. FORD: ROBERT
TROWBRIDGE HARTMANN, “THE RINGMASTER AT THE CIRCUS”²³⁸

Prior to the Nixon Administration, presidential speechwriters either worked in the White House Counsel’s office or wrote on a part-time basis in addition to other responsibilities. It was President Richard Nixon who first established the speech writers’ section in the White House, first known as the Writing and Research Department and later as the Editorial Department. Under Ford

²³⁸ Robert T. Hartmann, Counsellor to the President, 1974–1977. Interview, 12/9/76. Hyde-Wayne Oral History Collection, Box 1. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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the section underwent some changes and became the Editorial Office. The Editorial Office was one of the larger sections in the Ford White House. At the top of the vertical structure was Robert Hartmann, who was also Ford’s top political adviser and the head of the speechwriting unit, similar to Sorensen’s under Kennedy.²³⁹

Hartmann received a BA from Stanford University and worked as a reporter, and later as Washington bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times*. Before he was elevated to the position of Counselor to President Ford, in late ’60s and early ’70s, Robert Hartmann served as Minority Sergeant-at-Arms and Legislative Assistant to the Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford in the US House of Representatives, and subsequently, as Chief of Staff to Vice President Gerald R. Ford.²⁴⁰ Hartmann’s function as Presidential Counselor, embraced “anything” that the White House “got into, in terms of giving input or recommendations.”²⁴¹ In an operational sense, Hartmann’s jurisdiction expanded beyond speeches to “the whole output of words which bear the name of Gerald R. Ford.” The goal and the challenge of Hartmann’s job was to maintain

the integrity of presidential utterances and consistency is that I was not seeking perfection, but I was seeking credibility in following the Ford style, for which there are not many experts. Our problem was not only to write well ... but to write like President Ford would write if he had the time. Or would speak, if he had the time to

239. Paul A. Theis, a journalist, was beneath Hartmann and he was Executive editor and administrator of the White House Editorial Office in charge of administering the office and making assignments. Next was Milton Friedman, deputy editor and senior writer. Then, was Casserly who held the title of editor. Robert Orben was a humor writer who provided the light touch to the President Ford’s speeches. But as Orben admitted, none of them really had any kind of formal training or degree in speech or communication. The speechwriting in the Ford White House was a joint effort. Over time there had developed a practical division of labor and speechwriters were assigned what they did best. Most of the Ford writers did not specialize in specific policy areas. See Gage William Chapel, “Speech writing in the Ford Administration: An Interview with Presidential Speechwriter Robert Orben,” *Exetasis*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (17 June 15, 1976). Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

240. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, *Biographies of Other Administration Officials with Cabinet Rank during Gerald R. Ford Presidency, 1974–1977*, retrieved on March 5, 2007 from <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/LIBRARY/exhibits/cabinet/cabrank.pdf>.

241. Robert T. Hartmann, Counselor to the President, 1974–1977. Interview, 12/9/76. Hyde-Wayne Oral History Collection, Box 1. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

compose it in advance.²⁴²

Importantly, apart from the concern of writing speeches in a way that would reflect President Ford's style, Hartmann saw his role in far broader terms. A presidential speech, he noted,

is not merely the formal announcement of matters that have been internally debated and decided. The drafting of the document *is* the debate, and the text the President finally accepts *is* the decision. This makes the writer, and especially the chief writer, much more than a good wordsmith stringing his phrases like precious pearls on a stack of heavyweight bond paper. It puts him at the vortex of every top-level policy storm.²⁴³

Robert Hartmann's decision to purge the Nixon speechwriting organization had damaging consequences. Hartmann fired "the top-notch speechwriting organization" and apparently employed "mediocres he happened to know."²⁴⁴ Speechwriters brought in by Hartmann included Bob Orben, a humor writer and Milton Friedman, who specialized in foreign policy speeches. As Andrew Downer Crain noted, "Hartmann's deficient speechwriting organization was particularly unfortunate because Ford needed a professional, competent speechwriting organization, staffed with people to offset his ineffective public speaking skills."²⁴⁵

Hartmann was the principal architect of Ford's State of the Union Addresses. His function went beyond the editorial role and included participation in the development of domestic legislative policy. Along with Ford's senior staff that included: Seidman, O'Neill, Jones, Zarb, Buchen, Greenspan, Marsh, Schmults, MacAvoy, Calkins, Quern, Robert Hartmann belonged to the SOTU

242. Robert T. Hartmann, Counsellor to the President, 1974–1977. Interview, 12/9/76. Hyde-Wayne Oral History Collection, 3. Box 1. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

243. Robert T. Hartmann, *Palace Politics: An Inside Account of the Ford Years* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), 384–85.

244. Andrew Downer Crain, *The Ford Presidency: a History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 70.

245. *Ibid.*

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coordinating group.²⁴⁶ Before a policy recommendation reached the President, all of the senior staff, the Counselors and Assistants to the President were requested to comment on these recommendations.²⁴⁷ As Hartmann admitted, to say that he wrote the State of the Union would not be accurate: “that’s more accurate if you’re talking about the acceptance speech or one of the bicentennial speeches. . . . Those kind of things [the SOTU] are very much a composite product.”²⁴⁸ With respect to the drafting of 1976 Address, Hartmann admitted, he could be more accurately termed “the ringmaster at the circus.”²⁴⁹

The preparations for the President’s 1976 State of the Union began as soon as the work on his 1975 message ended. The President initiated the process of soliciting feedback and information in connection with his 1976 SOTU as early as February 3, 1975. Ford also started a series of Presidential Conferences, perceived as “an opportunity to reach a group of Governors who are likely to be helpful as advocates for the passage of parts of your economic and energy proposals.”²⁵⁰ Under Ford, the Domestic Council was charged with the assignment to “to review current domestic programs and develop new concepts, policies and recommendations for . . . January 1976 State of the Union Message.”²⁵¹ And “to formulate the comprehensive, cohesive Ford Administration program for 1976.”²⁵² Vice President Nelson Rockefeller served as Vice Chairman of the Domestic Council and was charged with

246. Memo, Jim Cannon to the President, “State of the Union message,” December 22, 1975. folder: SOTU, 1976 – Report from Cannon to the President 12/22/75 (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

247. Hartmann, Interview, 12/9/76, 6–7.

248. *Ibid.*, 5.

249. *Ibid.*

250. Memo, Jim Falk to the President, “Working Dinner with Southeast Governors,” February 3, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976, Chronology of Preparations (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

251. Memo, Vice President to the President, “Domestic Policy Recommendations for the State of the Union,” December 10, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976—Report of Vice President to President, 12/10/75, Cannon Papers, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

252. Memo, the Vice Chairman of the Domestic Council to the President, “Ford Administration Programs for 1976,” February 20, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976, Chronology of Preparations (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

directly supervising its work. To strengthen the Domestic Council, Ford added the heads of his Economic Policy Board and his Energy Resources Council to its membership. The membership of the Domestic Council also included all the Cabinet Secretaries except Secretaries of State and Defense. The Council's role was potentially powerful, but must have contended with the Office of Management and Budget (previously BOB), which put practical funding limits on programs. In the process of developing the State of the Union resource materials for submission to the President, a number of sections of actual draft speech language were prepared by the Domestic Council despite the fact that the Domestic Council did not have the assignment of drafting the State of the Union.²⁵³ Along with the Domestic Council, the Economic Policy Board, the National Security Council and the Cabinet became incorporated into the State of the Union coordinating group. As National Security Advisor, General Brent Scowcroft was charged with providing the content of the foreign policy section of the SOTU.²⁵⁴ The Economic Policy Board and the senior White House advisers discussed at length the approach and substance of the economic section in the SOTU.²⁵⁵

The formulation of the President's program that culminated in his 1976 State of the Union Address had not been as organized and systematized process as it could have been.²⁵⁶ The reasons for that were multiple, including the total decentralization of responsibilities in both the Domestic Council and the entire White House. Richard Parson who was Domestic Council Counsel and Associate Director for Justice, Civil Rights, Drugs and Consumer Affairs, 1975–1977 remembered:

253. Memorandum, Art Quern to Jim Cannon, January 7, 1976. "State of the Union Language." Folder: Suggested Draft Language. Cannon Papers, Box 40. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

254. Draft Outline of State of the Union Message, November 24, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1977 Draft Outline 11/24/76 (1) Cannon Papers, Box 15. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

255. Memo, L. William Seidman to the President, "Discussion of the Economy in the State of the Union Message," December 22, 1975. Folder: SOTU 1976—Report to the President, 12/22/75 (2). James Cannon Papers, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

256. Richard Parson, Interview, 5/7/76 Hyde-Wayne Oral History Collection, Box 1. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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The way the message was ultimately developed, each of the various entities that exist in the White House were asked to come up with some ideas. Give us some ideas for the message. And so we all sort of went about our separate ways, developing ideas, developing notions, coming up with thoughts. At some point in time these were all literally just pulled together in a mass of paper. A committee of about ten editors sort of went down and threw out three of every four pages to get it down to a usable text size. Then finally those pages, those ideas were pulled together by a single editor.²⁵⁷

The ideas for the inclusion in the speech came from “an infinite variety of sources.” Parson thought that instead of having all the organizations develop their own ideas and themes, these central themes around which the SOTU would be built, should be developed by the President and his senior advisors. Then an entity like the Domestic Council, which Parson saw as “just a synthesizer,” would “develop the various ornaments to hang on the skeleton that the President and his advisors have outlined.”²⁵⁸ In the process of preparing President Ford’s 1976 SOTU, the White House staff held fifteen meetings with agency heads, each two hours long, “to develop a set of proposals for the President’s State of the Union message.”²⁵⁹ These meetings would take place in the Situation Conference Room of the White House or the Roosevelt Room, and were conducted by John Cannon.²⁶⁰ The Domestic Council, the Vice President’s staff, the staff of the department in question participated in those meetings.²⁶¹ As the Ford Administration was facing serious economic problems, Ford’s SOTUS focused on the economy. Roy L. Ash, director of

257. *Ibid.*, 16.

258. *Ibid.*, 17.

259. Meeting of Richard L. Roudebush, Administrator, Veterans Administration, and James M. Cannon (Executive Director of the Domestic Council), December 4, 1975. Folder: SOTU 1976—Meetings with Cabinet Members (6). Jim Cannon, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

260. Meeting of Alan Greenspan and James M. Cannon (Executive Director of the Domestic Council), September 25, 1975. Folder: SOTU 1976—Meetings with Cabinet Members (3). Jim Cannon, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

261. See, for example, Meeting of Russel E. Train and James M. Cannon (Executive Director of the Domestic Council), September 2, 1975. Folder: SOTU 1976—Meetings with Cabinet Members (3). Jim Cannon, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

the Office of Management and Budget and his designated successor, James T. Lynn were invited to participate in the SOTU preliminary planning sessions.²⁶² As the director of the Office of Management and Budget, Lynn participated both in supervising the drafting process of the SOTU as well as in the SOTU reviewing process.²⁶³ The Domestic Council process that is “a policy coordinating mechanism,” finished by the end of December or early January and then the actual writing of the State of the Union took over.

In early January 1976, the group led by Hartmann, and including half dozen of Ford’s advisers, including William Seidman, Executive Director of Economic Policy Board, James Lynn, Director of the Office of Management and Budget; Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers; James Cannon, the Domestic Council Director; and William Baroody, Assistant to the President for Public Liaison, cultural adviser Robert Goldwin, were sent away to Williamsburg for a few days to review various ideas and proposals for inclusion in Ford’s SOTU and prepare a draft.²⁶⁴ Ford chose Hartmann to be in charge of the operation. Ford’s ’76 SOTU was envisioned as a statement of his campaign platform and his “vision for America in the next five years,” that would be addressed to the people.²⁶⁵ The “Williamsburg braintrusting” turned out to be a fiasco, however.²⁶⁶ The group would not be able to produce a single address in unique and symbolic “site and atmosphere of the events which led to our [American] independence in 1776.”²⁶⁷ Lynn,

262. Journal article, “White House Report/Speech writers shun flourishes in molding Ford’s image,” 1/25/75 National Journal Reports. Folder: State of the Union (2) David Gergen Files, Box 9. Gerald R. Ford Library.

263. See: Meeting of Earl L. Butz, Secretary of Agriculture and James M. Cannon (Executive Director of the Domestic Council), August 26, 1975. Folder: SOTU 1976—Meetings with Cabinet Members (1). Jim Cannon, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

264. Note, Pat McKee to Jim Cannon, “SOTU Chronology,” January 19, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1976, Chronology of Preparations (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

265. Newspaper article, Aldo Beckman, “State of the Union talk team effort,” *Chicago Tribune* (January 19, 1976). Folder: State of the Union 1976, 1/19–31/76. William Seidman Files, Box 166. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

266. Casserly, *The Ford White House*, 282.

267. Letter, President Gerald R. Ford to Mr Donald J. Gonzales. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Williamsburg Trip. Hartmann Papers, Box 182. The President thanked for providing unique

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Greenspan and Seidman, reportedly remained only a day, the others did very little. Hartmann and Friedman, as Casserly’s diary records, spent most of their time eating and drinking and did not write anything until their return to Washington on January 10. As of January 12, there existed only a “very rough” draft of thirty-five pages.”²⁶⁸

The production of the Address also revealed another, broad problem: the President and the Republican Party in general lacked the vision. Casserly claimed that he “attempted to get Hartmann and Theis to offer the country some ‘vision,’ as well as some idea of what the President stands for, but they have resisted the thought.”²⁶⁹ Friedman and Hartmann insisted that the President “must keep his options open.” Presumably, to make compromises, for example, on energy. In the end, there was “no promised vision in the speech. No promised philosophy. No clear picture of America which Gerald Ford would have us, as a people, inherit.”²⁷⁰

Under Hartmann, the speechwriting organization was in chaos and the drafting process of the SORU was very long. This state of affair may be attributed to Hartmann’s deficiencies as a drafter and coordinator, but also to the way, the President managed his speechwriting organization and contributed to his speeches. When a writer was assigned to write a speech for President Nixon, he was called over to the President and “Nixon told him precisely what he wanted written. Nixon would later call the same writer with changes when he saw the first draft. They really worked together.”²⁷¹ Writers under Ford did not really work that way. Ford “doesn’t outline any speeches. He doesn’t meet you alone. Hartmann is always there and Hartmann

facilities at Colonial Williamsburg for the work of the President’s Counsellor Bob Hartmann and other senior members of the President’s staff on the Bicentennial State of the Union Message. The President said that “it was particularly fitting that this aspect of the 1976 address took place at the site and atmosphere of the events which led to our independence in 1776.” Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

268. Casserly, *The Ford White House*, 282.

269. *Ibid.*, 284.

270. *Ibid.*, 291–92.

271. *Ibid.*, 292.

really doesn't want you there. And Hartmann doesn't give any guidance."²⁷² For instance, the Draft Outline of the 1976 SOTU was dated November 3, 1975.²⁷³ It took more than ten drafts to develop the speech and complete the drafting process. The extant drafts provide evidence of the involvement of the President and the Domestic Council: Jim Cannon, James Cavanaugh, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs, and Richard Parson. The President may have not written outlines of his speeches, but he commented on the drafts and edited them.²⁷⁴ Early drafts, however, were written in a poor, spoken and unpresidential language, with little dignity as for the Bicentennial of American independence; their length ranged from 30 to 60 pages, as the drafting process progressed. The President liked very few passages in Hartmann's draft. The only paragraph that Cannon evaluated as "good" was the statement on page 9, "the state of our Union is better—but still not good enough."²⁷⁵ This statement survived to the final draft. The transition from the first to the second draft reveals that Hartmann did not incorporate all the changes the President wanted him to.²⁷⁶ In the President's view, the second draft needed shortening and condensing, particularly the sections on government intrusions and regulation in the areas of transportation, employment, financial matters, trade, communications, health, and insurance. The President also suggested to "omit" passages where instead of speech's text there were lacunae to be filled with the estimates of tax reforms costs.²⁷⁷

Putting the 1975 SOTU together was a very challenging process. Several factors led to the situation. The US economy was experiencing recession

272. *Ibid.*

273. "Draft Outline of the Message," November 3, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976-Draft, 11/4/75. Jim Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

274. Draft #2, 1/13/76. Folder: "President's Comments." Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

275. Draft, Cannon's copy of the State of the Union Draft, 1/12/76. Folder: SOTU Drafts (3). Cannon Papers, Box 39. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

276. Draft, Second Draft of the State of the Union, 1/13/76. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Second Draft President's Comments, Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

277. Note, handwritten, Dick Cheney to Bob Hartmann. Undated. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Final Draft Dick Cheney's Comments. Hartmann Papers, Box 179. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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and inflation at the same time. Greenspan was so “genuinely frightened” by the economic situation in the country that he often changed his mind as to how to handle the crisis.²⁷⁸ One day he would fight inflation, the other recession. There was very little consensus those days at the White House. Greenspan was annoyed when others challenged his economic wisdom. As the speechwriters received contradictory guidance from Greenspan and other presidential advisers, President Ford’s decisions changed and delayed.

In the process of crafting Ford’s 1975 SOTU, simultaneous preparations were underway for a pre-State of the Union address on economy and energy. It was scheduled to be televised from the Lincoln Library of the White House on January 13, 1975, just two days before the SOTU. The reason why the President decided to deliver this pre-State of the Union speech earlier was that he had “to jockey with the Congress for position.” As the new, heavily Democratic Congress attempted to preempt President’s January 15 address by releasing their economic program earlier, Ford and Hartmann decided to “jump on Congress with the twenty-page speech on the eve of Congress’s return,” to prevent the 94th Congress from appearing that it runs the nation.²⁷⁹

In the meantime organization problems arose. Heads of different agencies and department attempted to go directly to the President with their part of the SOTU. But as Casserly noted: “If everyone went directly to the President with his part of the State of the Union message, nothing would make sense.”²⁸⁰ Including this or that section in the message seemed to be a question of priority and urgency of a proposal or a program. The work of the presidential assistants and the Domestic Council was to distill agency proposals. Frank Zarb (Federal Energy Administration), for instance, went directly to the President to personally hand him his version of the energy section of the message instead of going through Paul Theis, who was the head of the editorial/speechwriting section so that all were on the “same wavelength.”²⁸¹

278. John J. Casserly, *The Ford White House. The Diary of a Speechwriter* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1977), 29.

279. *Ibid.*

280. *Ibid.*, 27.

281. *Ibid.*

Casserly's impression was that many of these department and agency chiefs tried to outsmart and outmaneuver the President.

Milton A. Friedman would sit on all policy-planning sessions to get familiarized with major economic and fiscal issues and translate them into simple prose understandable to millions of people. As Friedman admitted: "we were less concerned with style and the imprint of history ... [w]e wanted to produce a practical response to very real problems, to communicate extremely sophisticated ideas in a way that would achieve the support of the Congress and the cooperation of the American people."²⁸² The question of themes was the key question at an early stage of the speech preparation process. Several themes offered for consideration included: the problem of economy in an increasingly interdependent world; problem of foreign policy in a world of rapidly changing realities, decreasingly tense super-power relations, wide poor-rich disparities, policy towards the Soviet Union and China. The inflation experienced in '74 was generated by "excessive deficit financing" in the Vietnam war period and "expansionary monetary policy" in '72. Following Watergate, integrity of government and confidence in the capacity of government had to be restored.²⁸³ Hartmann's first draft of the Soru, submitted to the President, was "short on specifics and long on rhetoric" and did not have "a clear and central theme."²⁸⁴

Economic problems of the '70s that the Ford Administration had to face were urgent. The US was experiencing the highest rate of inflation since the WWII and a recession with unemployment over seven percent. The US also faced a growing dependence for oil on unreliable foreign sources at prices that posed very serious national security, financial and economic problems. As viewed by the Administration, inflation has resulted from a number of causes

282. Cabinet Meeting Minutes, 10/11/74, Box 3, James E. Connor Files, Gerald R. Ford Library, retrieved on March 6, 2007 from <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/cabinet/741011.htm>.

283. Wayne Valis to Bill Baroody and Bob Goldwin, "Themes for State of the Union," December 19, 1974. Folder: Presidents-Speeches-State of the Union Address 1975 12/9/75 Background (1). Gerald R. Ford Library.

284. Gerald R. Ford, *A Time to Heal* (Harper & Row, Publishers and the Reader's Digest Association, Inc., 1979), 227.

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including many years of excessive Federal spending and too rapid growth of money and credit, the quadrupling of oil prices by the major foreign producing countries, poor harvest leading to higher food prices and two devaluations of the dollar. This inflation has helped create the recession by cutting the real purchasing power of paychecks.²⁸⁵

The focus of the SOTU, therefore, was energy and the economy. In consequence of this decision, participants in the preliminary planning sessions were drawn mostly from those two fields and included: Roy L. Ash, Director of the Office of Management and Budget and his designated successor, James T. Lynn; William E. Simon (Treasury Secretary); Alan Greenspan (Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers); L. William Seidman, Assistant to the President for Economic Affairs; Rogers C. B. Morton (Interior Secretary); Frank G. Zarb (Federal Energy Administration); and Arthur F. Burns, (Chairman of the Federal Reserve System). Donald Rumsfeld, Assistant to the President; Kenneth R. Cole Jr., Executive Director of the Domestic Council; John O. Marsh Jr., Presidential Counselor, and Robert Hartmann were also consulted. In addition to the planning sessions, position papers, recommendations and proposals poured into the White House from various federal departments and agencies.²⁸⁶

In late December 1974, the “economic” team of Seidman and Friedman completed the first draft of the State of the Union, after working through the night until 3 P.M.²⁸⁷ A couple of hours later they boarded the plane and flew to Vail, Colorado, where the President was spending Christmas. The following day, the President and his advisers carefully went over the raw draft of the speech. In the weeks that followed, at least seven drafts ensued. The President liked the second page, which depicted him as someone who did not intend to

285. “Economy and Energy—the President’s Program in Brief.” Folder: SOTU, 1975 General (1). Ron Nessen Papers, Box 27. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

286. Journal article, “White House Report/Speech writers shun flourishes in molding Ford’s image,” 1/25/75 National Journal Reports. Folder: State of the Union (2) David Gergen Files, Box 9. Gerald R. Ford Library.

287. Journal article, “White House Report/Speech writers shun flourishes in molding Ford’s image,” 1/25/75 National Journal Reports. Folder: State of the Union (2) David Gergen Files, Box 9. Gerald R. Ford Library.

“stand idly by,” but someone who wants to act, together with the American people, to rebuild the economy. The draft made no promises that the basic economic problems would be “corrected overnight.” It encouraged acting. The solutions provided in the draft were not to initiate new programs, but rather begin to reduce federal spending and federal deficit;” stop “chronic federal overspending” that took place in “the past several decades.” President Ford agreed that the following was an accurate recognition of the nation’s problems: “The root of our national economic problem is the growth of federal spending. We have been adding so many new programs that the size and growth of the federal budget has taken on a life of its own. We have developed a whole series of special programs that contribute greatly to the well-being of this nation: social security, Medicare, food stamps, veteran benefits, welfare, unemployment insurance. But we have not considered what the effects will be of our efforts to pay for these programs.” The choice that the government now faced was between the sharp increase of the taxes or the cutting back on the growth of the programs. At this stage, the draft was more of a lecture on economics than the President’s Address to the nation.²⁸⁸ After stating these basis options, the draft went on to explain the problem of the budget deficit which resulted in unemployment and inflation. The draft encouraged to prevent further deficit and tax increase, and thus combating inflation and unemployment.²⁸⁹

This asked Casserly to help Friedman edit his draft. Specifically, This asked Casserly to cut the 72 pages of the written address to 20 pages in three hours without leaving out important details, and deliver the shortened version to Hartmann. The following day, This also asked Casserly to draft a new lead to the Address that would not portray the divided and defeated nation, but the nation facing challenges. As Casserly learned later, the reason why

288. President’s Marked Copy of the State of the Union, December 19, 1974. Folder: Presidents-Speeches-State of the Union Address 1975 – 1/6/75 Draft—President’s marked copy, Robert Goldwin Papers, Box 12. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

289. Note, Reminder to Neta, 1/9/75. Folder: 1/15/75 State of the Union (2), Hartmann Papers, Box 172. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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he was asked to cut the long version was that Hartmann was writing the final version of an advance State of the Union message.²⁹⁰

The most serious problems with the speechwriting organization was competitiveness among the White House staff. If Ford had lacked basic qualities of an inspiring speaker, his speechwriting organization was a catastrophe. Apparently, also Donald Rumsfeld began editing Friedman’s draft, with which Hartmann did not agree. Beside blowups between Rumsfeld and Hartmann, Rumsfeld started to get between the President and Hartmann. In the capacity of Assistant to the President and Coordinator of the White House Staff, Donald Rumsfeld infringed upon Hartmann’s area of responsibility. Rumsfeld would ask others, including David Gergen from the Treasury Department, to produce alternative drafts.²⁹¹ A major negligence that eventually had to hurt the speechwriting process was that unbeknownst to the President, his SOTU was crafted by two competing teams: on the one hand there was Hartmann, and on the other Rumsfeld and his informal speechwriting team. Hartmann was aware that a number of other people worked on their drafts of the SOTU. He asked the President that he in person at a special senior staff meeting directed that all drafts, suggestions and proposals be submitted to Hartmann, so that they could be considered in the process of deliberating on the SOTU. Hartmann also wanted the President to clearly state that it was Hartmann who was in charge of that project. Hartmann felt that he needed such firm backing from the President, or otherwise he would not be able to do the job that the President wanted him to do.²⁹² Rumsfeld and his other aides put together a rival draft and when these two drafts converged on Ford’s office a day before the President’s scheduled Address, Ford urged the two factions to amalgamate these two speeches into one. But Hartmann and the Rumsfeld group could not work out a compromise. In effect, Ford had to edit the speech and did not approve of the final version until 4:00 A.M.²⁹³

290. Casserly, *The Ford White House*, 29.

291. Crain, *Ford Presidency*, 70.

292. Memo, Robert T. Hartmann to the President, January 6, 1976. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Memo to the President. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

293. Newspaper article, “State of the Union talk team effort,” *Chicago Tribune*, January

Hartmann considered the State of the Union “a very important document because it freezes, chisels in stone for the remainder of the year, some of the things that become the policy of the President. It is no secret that the various parts of the executive bureaucracy want to get their little pet project frozen in the President’s words. They compete very fiercely for that. Those who do in most cases ultimately have to go to the President for a final decision.”²⁹⁴ Ideally, the speechwriter and his staff should be interested only in “style, grammar and accuracy,” but they also have the research part of their function. Things must be checked for factual accuracy, but there is a “gray area,” where it is hard to tell whether one talks about style or substance. This is where arguments and problems arise.²⁹⁵ When Ford’s domestic staff had a problem with some things proposed by one of the associate directors and changed it, then Hartmann and Cannon would try to resolve that. If they could not, the issue would be resolved by the President, who was the arbitrator:

We have had some differences—the way the words are placed. The emphasis given is an important part of policy-making in itself. Each person with his own little project and enthusiasm wants it given more stress and more attention than other things in the speech. . . . This typically occurred in the process of writing the State of the Union message, where “everybody has a piece of it.”²⁹⁶

Ford’s speeches had far too many editors, which in the end must have hurt their quality. Rumsfeld demanded too wide a circulation of drafts, which resulted in “overly-vague language that did not stake out any real positions.”²⁹⁷ The speech was distributed to numerous officials, departments, presidential counselors and advisers for their comments and inputs. The White House research department checked every bit of information in a speech for accuracy and fact. The speech was cleared once it was approved and initialized by

19, 1976. Folder: State of the Union – 1976 1/19–31/76. William Seidman, Box 166. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

294. Hartmann, Interview, 12/9/76, 6. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

295. Ibid.

296. Ibid., 4.

297. Crain, *Ford Presidency*, 70.

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officials involved in the area addressed in the speech. There was no rigid formula as to how the clearance was made in the Ford White House. As Orben noted, “something like the State of the Union Address, one that involves many different areas, might be checked out by a dozen or so different governmental bodies—perhaps more.”²⁹⁸

Before the final draft was approved, clearance was sought from at least 15 Administration officials, including Cabinet Secretaries, Senior White House aides, the President’s chief economic advisers and White House researchers.²⁹⁹

The lack of discipline, competition and a haphazard drafting process eventually delayed Ron Nessen’s Press briefing. Although the material, fact sheets and copies of the President’s Address were to be embargoed until 10:00 A.M. January 15, Nessen promised to provide the Press with the details of the President’s 1975 SOTU and make press briefing material on the SOTU available at 8:00 A.M. The drafting turned into a catastrophe. On the morning of the briefing “the goddamn thing” was “too long (over an hour), even after being cut by at least one-fourth last night (and this morning).” The plan was that “ol’ GF” would get a copy of the speech on the morning of January 15, triple-spaced, and would “start scratching things out, to get it down to whatever it is he wants to get it down to (presumably 30–45 minutes, but nobody knows how far down it will get cut).” Apparently, as Nessen learnt, the President “was in his office until 2:55 A.M.” Rumsfeld was quoted to have said that: “if that word gets out—that he was there so late—it will be pretty solid evidence of just what happened, ‘a monumental fuckup.’” When Rumsfeld learned about “the logistical problems and the need for getting something in people’s hands” for the Press briefing January 15, “so it wouldn’t look like we don’t know how to run the free world,” he decided that what was put together with the President’s assistance the night prior to the meeting with the Press “would be a message and that the President could whittle it down later for the

298. *Ibid.*, 18.

299. Journal article, “White House Report/Speech writers shun flourishes in molding Ford’s image,” 1/25/75 *National Journal Reports*. Folder: State of the Union (2) David Gergen Files, Box 9. Gerald R. Ford Library.

speech.”³⁰⁰ During the Press briefing, Nessen announced that it would be the official and traditional State of the Union Address. What Nessen said of the lack of the copy of the speech during the briefing was a distortion of facts. The delay in producing copies of the message and some other materials for the Press was explained in terms of the voluminous material that strained “the reproduction system to its limits.” Of the lack of the precise text of the President’s speech, Nessen said to the effect that “since the President wanted to review his speech again this morning we can not be certain that we will be able to provide you with an advance of precisely what he will say this afternoon—but I can assure you that the substance of what he will say will be from the message.” Nessen would neither attempt to explain the message nor take questions on it. After the President delivered his State of the Union, some historians noted that it was “the most downbeat State of the Union message in our two centuries,” but “[i]f only they had seen it in the raw...”³⁰¹

Despite the early start, the speech was barely finished on time and only after the President’s outburst of anger. Before the final version was produced there were eleven drafts of the SOTU, but as his aides reported, the President considered the 1976 message really his own.³⁰²

Assessment

Bob Hartmann served as Ford’s top political adviser and chief speechwriter. This combination of roles, as we saw under Kennedy-Sorensen duo, can be a prerequisite for successful speechwriting: the man who writes presidential speeches enjoys close access to the President, knows how to craft a speech to make it sound as if it had been written by the President personally, he understands government policies (or at least some of them) and himself shapes them. Despite having been equipped with the right tools for success, speechwriting under Bob Hartmann and his poor administrative and managerial

300. Note to Ron Nessen, January 15, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1975 General (1) R. Nessen Papers, Box 27. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

301. Casserly, *The Ford White House*, 31.

302. Newspaper article, Philip Shabecoff, “Mr. Ford in search of the Speech.” Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Reaction to the Speech. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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skills, as also John R. Green noted,³⁰³ was a failure that vividly demonstrates how the President’s fate is shaped by other people.

Overall, Ford’s State of the Unions were products of integration of the ideas proposed by the Domestic Council, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Council of Economic Advisers. Domestic Council was not assigned to writing speeches; it was a policy coordinating mechanism. A look behind the scenes of crafting Ford’s State of the Unions, reveals a number of problems that contributed to that state of affairs. The process of producing the SOTU was handicapped due to White House staff competition and an uncontrolled decentralization of speechwriting assignments, the submission of ideas from an infinite variety of sources, the shifting focus of the SOTU, little or no respect of Hartmann’s authority, and infringing upon Hartmann’s responsibilities by other White House staff members. Given the situation and the likely lack of backing from the boss that Hartmann both asked for and needed, he could at best compare his job to “the ringmaster in the circus.”

SPEECHWRITING UNDER PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH

During the Bush years, the White House Communications Office functions included speechwriting, media relations, and intergovernmental communications. David Demarest served as the director of the White House Office of Communications during most of Bush’s term. Demarest, an official in the Reagan Administration, thought Reagan’s speechwriters had too high a profile and were trying to push their own policy agenda. Thus in assembling the speechwriting staff for President Bush, Demarest made sure they would not do the same.³⁰⁴ The staff was headed by Chriss Winston, Deputy Assistant to the President for Communication, the first woman to head a presidential speechwriting office. Winston mainly assigned speeches and edited drafts

303. John Robert Greene, *The Presidency of Gerald R. Ford* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 22.

304. Mark J. Rozzell, “In Reagan’s shadow: Bush’s antirhetorical presidency,” *The Free Library* (January, 1, 1998), retrieved on October 12, 2008 from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/InReagan'sshadow:Bush'santirhetoricalpresidency.-a020791089>.

and was later substituted by Tony Snow. In 1992, Marlin Fitzwater took the Communications Director title, and Snow became the head of media affairs. Other writers included Mark Davis, Curt Smith, Dan McGroarty, Mary Kate Grant, Jennifer Grossman, Mark Lange and Robert Simon. Typically, the writers in the Bush White House had little access to the President and “very limited contact with the man who delivered their words, making very difficult the task of developing speeches that suited the president’s wishes.”³⁰⁵

The actual drafting of Bush’s State of the Unions was undertaken by a team of different speechwriters each year. Unlike the traditional SOTU, the speechwriting process of “the February 9 speech” of 1989 was brief. It took only a few days and one major speechwriter to complete the speech. The 1989 Address was drafted by Robert E. Grady, who served in the White House as a Deputy Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and as an Executive Associate Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Prior to the White House assignment, Grady served as chief speechwriter and senior advisor for the 1988 Bush-Quayle presidential campaign. Grady never referred to this address as the State of the Union, but rather as “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989,” or “Address of the Joint Session of Congress, Thursday, February 9, 1989.”

The drafting process of the February 9 speech spanned between February 5 and February 9 and produced six drafts. The earliest draft of “Message of President Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989,” was a morning draft dated February 5, 1989.³⁰⁶ The final draft of the “Address of the Joint Session of Congress, Thursday, February 9, 1989,” was produced on the morning of February 8, the draft’s content, though longer, was essentially that of the final Address.³⁰⁷ Within a few hours the “Message of President George

305. Ibid.

306. Draft, February 5, 1989 Draft. “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989.” Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File–Backup. Folder: Address to Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 (OA 6353) [2], Box 2. George Bush Presidential Library.

307. Draft, February 8, 1989 Draft “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989.” Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File–Drafts. Folder: Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 (OA 2771) [3], Box 2. George Bush

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Bush to a Joint Session of Congress,” was cut down to some twenty pages and checked for factual accuracy. The afternoon version of the February 8 speech the draft included “final changes” and it was put into teleprompter.³⁰⁸ In terms of its substance, the draft had not undergone any major edits. The draft was marked for pauses within respective paragraphs.³⁰⁹ Final Press Text, dated 8:30 P.M., was embargoed until 9:00 P.M.³¹⁰

In 1990, Dan McGroarty and Peggy Dooley were responsible for drafting the President’s State of the Union Address. Peggy Dooley was a researcher in the White House Speechwriting Office of President Bush, where she worked on the President’s first State of the Union Address in 1990. Dan McGroarty served as Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and Deputy Director of White House Speechwriting. In 1991, the SOTU was drafted by speechwriters Jennifer Grossman with a BSc in Government, Public Policy, and International Affairs from Harvard and Mark Lange, with an MBA from Stanford. Bush’s 1992 SOTU was drafted by the head of media affairs Tony Snow and Robert H. Simon—a young speechwriter with a degree in Economics and Government and a gift for writing. During his four years in the White House, President Bush and his staff produced three State of the Unions. No State of the Union was produced in the first and the last year of the Bush presidency. The White House referred to Bush’s 1990 State of the Union Address as his “first.”³¹¹

Presidential Library.

308. Draft, February 8, 1989, 2:18 P.M. draft, “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989.” Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File–Drafts. Folder: Address to Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 (OA 6853) [1]. George Bush Presidential Library.

309. Draft, Final Changes, “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989.” Draft February 9, 1989, 6 AM. Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File–Drafts. Folder: Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 [OA 2771] [3], Box 2. George Bush Presidential Library.

310. Draft, “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989.” Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File–Drafts. Folder: Address to Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 (OA 6853) [1], Box 2. George Bush Presidential Library.

311. Fact Sheet, The President’s State of the Union Message Fact Sheet, WHORM: Subject File–Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 Case No. 128526SS. Box 32. George Bush Presidential Library.

Although typically the SOTU drafting process was quite demanding, the most strenuous period fell on the second half of January. The McGroarty-Dooley drafts of the 1990 State of the Union developed between January 11 and January 29.³¹² Most of the substantive content of the 1990 SOTU developed already in the first draft. James Cicconi, deputy Chief of Staff to President George H. W. Bush, and not the speechwriters, submitted the first draft of the SOTU to the President and requested his “general impressions of the draft, its directions and tone.”³¹³ The draft was not circulated at that point and did not reflect any staff comments. Changes or comments were made on Draft #2, dated January 18, 1990.³¹⁴ The tentative State of the Union draft schedule suggests that SOTU drafts were distributed for comments mainly among the core group of the White House staffers, “a coterie of senior advisers.”³¹⁵ Throughout the Bush presidency, the group included Chief of Staff John H. Sununu, Director of the Office of Management and Budget Richard Darman, General Scowcroft, National Security advisor, Roger Porter, Jim Cicconi, Ed Rogers and Andy Card, Assistant to the President and Deputy Chief of Staff. As subsequent drafts ensued, the formal close hold staffing expanded to include the Vice President, the core group of the White House staffers, and SOTU coordinating group: President Bush’s Secretary of the Cabinet David Q. Bates, White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater, White House Counsel C. Boyden Gray, Frank McClure and Chairman of Council of Economic Advisers Mike Boskin. A clearance copy of President Bush’s 1990 SOTU illustrates the involvement of the Office of Management and Budget

312. Draft, McGroarty/Dooley Draft, January 11, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS. Box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

313. Memo, James Cicconi to the President, January 12, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS. Box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

314. Draft, Draft #2 (5:45 P.M.) State of the Union, January 18, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS, box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

315. Dilys M. Hill and Phil Williams, “Introduction: The Bush Administration—An Overview,” in *The Bush Presidency. Triumphs and Adversities*, ed. Dilys M. Hill and Phil Williams (New York: St. Martin’s Press: 1994), 12.

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also at the end of the drafting process. Its role was to check whether the economic passages of the draft were consistent with the budget. Any specific figures mentioned in the SOTU were referenced to specific pages in the Fiscal Year 1991 Budget Message.³¹⁶

The President was familiar already with the first draft of his SOTU. The second draft indicates the involvement of the State Department.³¹⁷ The draft of the foreign policy section of the 1990 SOTU was sent to the State Department for review. The draft at that point was restricted to “the seventh floor principals”—the department’s top staffers, including the secretary.³¹⁸ The suggestions offered by the State Department were minor and in essence submitted to “strengthen” the argument and “flesh out” the structure.³¹⁹ Subsequent drafts were sent to Richard Darman, Brent Scowcroft, Michael Boskin and Roger Porter to check facts and substantive statements in the draft.³²⁰ Their comments were to be directed to Chriss Winston’s and Cicconi’s office.³²¹ The draft was also sent to the President.³²² Vice President Dan Quayle’s office provided an insert on space, defense and product liability reform, but it was

316. Draft, January 29, 1990, folder: State of the Union, 1/31/90 [4], (OA 9316), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 49. George Bush Presidential Library.

317. Draft, McGroarty/Dooley Draft 5:45 P.M., January 18, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS, box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

318. Note, G. Philip Hughes to J. Stapleton Roy, State of the Union Address, January 26, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS, box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

319. Document, State Department Suggested Changes to State of the Union Address, January 26, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS, box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

320. Draft, McGroarty/Dooley draft, January 29, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

321. White House Staffing Memorandum, “State of the Union – 1/29/90 Draft,” January 29, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

322. White House Staffing Memorandum, James Cicconi to Scowcroft, Darman, Grey, Porter, Boskin, “State of the Union—1/29/90 draft,” January 29, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

not included in the SOTU, however.³²³

The process of staffing the speech was similar under the Grossman-Lange duo.³²⁴ As the drafts were produced, new ideas were still suggested for consideration.³²⁵ Roger Porter's job was to make sure that new ideas get "into the hopper."³²⁶ It was not until Draft B-3, dated January 29, 1991 that the civil rights passage, the passage on the federal government and the turnover approach were what they are in the final version.³²⁷ As late as January 29, William Tobey provided Brent Scowcroft with the Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney's, insert on SDI. The insert did not make it to the speech in its entirety, but the essence of it was incorporated into the SOTU.³²⁸ Two more drafts ensued on January 29.³²⁹ The afternoon draft bore a handwritten note that instructed to: "delete all pause marks, underlines, bracketed material."³³⁰ Once their draft started to resemble the final version, it was distributed to

323. Note, James Cicconi to Chriss Winston, January 30, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

324. Draft, Lange/Grossman State of the Union Address Draft B-1, January 28, 1991, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: State of the Union 1991, case number 214783SS [3], box 35. George Bush Presidential Library.

325. Memo, Roger Porter to Bill Kristol, January 16, 1991, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-91, State of the Union 1991, Case No. 218133 to Case No. 222943, box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

326. Memo, Mark Albrecht to Roger Porter, January 15, 1991. Bush Presidential Records, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, folder: SP 230-91, State of the Union 1991, Case No. 218133 to Case No. 222943. Box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

327. Draft, Lange/Grossman State of the Union Address Draft B-3, January 29, 1991. Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: State of the Union 1991, case number 214783SS [3], box 35. George Bush Presidential Library.

328. Memo, William Tobey to Brent Scowcroft, "SDI and the State of the Union," January 29, 1991, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-91, State of the Union 1991, Case No. 218133 to Case No. 222943, box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

329. Draft, Draft B-5, Lange/Grossman, January 29, 1991, folder: State of the Union 1/31/90 [OA 8210] [1], Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 49. George Bush Presidential Library.

330. Draft, Draft ACE, Lange/Grossman, January 29, 1991, folder: State of the Union 1/31/90 [OA 8210] [1], Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 49. George Bush Presidential Library.

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Scowcroft, Darman, Chief of Staff, C. Boyden Grey.³³¹ The drafts crafted by Grossman and Lange were quite short, 12–14 pages long.³³² In terms of their content, the drafts were statements of American principles, values, goals rather than outlines of legislative proposals. Typically, the domestic and foreign affairs sections alternated throughout Bush’s State of the Unions. Bush’s SOTU 1991, for instance, was almost equally divided between foreign, economic and domestic policy.³³³

In 1992, drafting the President’s SOTU would not begin until January 20. It was a joint effort of Tony Snow and Robert Simon. Tony Snow’s memorandum to speechwriters and researchers illustrates that in the second week of January 1992, it was safe to say that the State of the Union was “taking shape in way that we will like.”³³⁴ The major challenge with drafting the 1992 SOTU had to do with the President’s health problem in Japan.³³⁵ The President’s collapse during the dinner with the Prime Minister of Japan caused much alarm and raised questions about the President’s health. The situation was so embarrassing for everyone and the President in particular, that something had to be said about it in the State of the Union, which was to take place some twenty days following the incident. To diminish the impact of that situation, the drafters quoted letters that the President allegedly received from children who either just wanted to ask how it felt to faint, or who wanted to tell the President that they experienced something similar. The experiment

331. Draft, Lange/Grossman State of the Union Address Draft B-2, January 28, 1991. Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: State of the Union 1991, case number 214783SS [3], box 35. George Bush Presidential Library.

332. Draft #8, Jennifer Grossman & Mark Lange, January 14, 1991, State of the Union Material, folder: State of the Union1991, 1/29/91, Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, Box 81. George Bush Presidential Library.

333. Memo, Roger Porters to President Bush, “Wartime State of the Union Addresses,” February 2, 1991, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-71, State of the Union 1991, case number 214783SS, box 35. George Bush Presidential Library.

334. Memo, Tony Snow to Speechwriters and Researchers, “State of the Union and other Stuff,” January 8, 1992, Open P2/P5 Documents, Documents 6451–6750, box 22. George Bush Presidential Library.

335. Draft, January 26, 1992, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/28/92 (OA 7567), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 142 [1]. George Bush Presidential Library.

with children's letters was eventually dropped and substituted with a brief reference to Bush's sickness.³³⁶

As with every State of the Union, changes were made to the last moment. To save time on rewriting the entire draft, last minute changes were incorporated into the draft by stapling or gluing small pieces of paper with new text on the original draft.³³⁷ Subsequent changes and edits on the semi-final draft were minor and in effect served to improve the style, not substance of the draft.³³⁸ The handwritten edits were incorporated into the "Latest"—2:25 P.M. Draft of the President's State of the Union Address.³³⁹ James Cicconi and Brent Scowcroft contributed some final inserts.³⁴⁰ The Advanced Text of Remarks by the President on the State of the Union dated January 31, 1990, resembling a reading copy, was sent by James Cicconi to the Vice President, the Chief of Staff, General Scowcroft, John Sununu, Director Darman, Andy Card, Roger Poters, Ed Rogers, Bates, Marlin Fitzwater, C. Boyden Gray, Appointments Secretary Joseph Hagin, Assistant for Legislative Affairs Frank McClure, Newman, Sig Rogich, Chase Untermeyer, Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors Michael Boskin, Special Assistant to the President for Presidential Messages and Correspondence Shirley Green, and David Demarest among others.³⁴¹ The Vice President, Chief of Staff, Richard Darman, Andy Card, Brent Scowcroft, Porter and Rogers were kept updated on the changes and

336. Draft, January 27, 9:00 AM Draft. WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case Number 301892SS [5], box 39. George Bush Presidential Library.

337. See: Draft, 10:30 Draft of the President's State of the Union Message, January 31, 1990: 7, 21, folder: State of the Union 1/31/90 [OA 9310] [1], Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 49. George Bush Presidential Library.

338. Draft, Semi-Final Draft of the President's State of the Union Message, folder: State of the Union 1/31/90 [OA 9310] [1], Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 49. George Bush Presidential Library.

339. Draft, "Latest" – 2:25 P.M. Draft of the President's State of the Union Message, January 31, 1990, folder: State of the Union 1/31/90 [OA 9310] [1], Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 49. George Bush Presidential Library.

340. Draft inserts, undated, Possible inserts for State of the Union '90, folder: Open P2/P5 Documents, Documents 15,851–16,280, box 58. George Bush Presidential Library.

341. The Advanced Text of Remarks by the President on the State of the Union, January 31, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 Case No. 128526SS, box 32. George Bush Presidential Library.

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fact checks on the SOTU draft by James Cicconi.³⁴² Associate Counsel to the President J. S. Bybee reviewed the SOTU drafts.³⁴³

There was no essential difference in the organization of work of each speechwriting team. Speechwriters did not write directly to the President, nor did they receive any written instructions from the President. Deputy Chief of Staff to President George H. W. Bush—James Cicconi—and not the speechwriters, requested the President’s comments on drafts. Either a Chief of Staff or Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy, Roger B. Porter, solicited, received and coordinated the material for the SOTU. The essential tasks of the speechwriting team included research and drafting. David Demarest presented the President with the researcher’s findings and the choices that he faced with respect to the length and structure of the SOTU. The speechwriters were not completely isolated from the President, however. Evidence shows that a series of meetings to discuss the first draft were held and attended by the President and Dan McGroarty among others.³⁴⁴ The purpose of the meeting was to receive feedback and a sense of direction from the President on the first draft of the State of the Union. As John H. Sununu remembered:

You sit down with three or four people like this having honed the obviously inappropriate from the departments and you go and sit down with the President and you say, “Mr. President, these are the things people are looking for, what do you want in the speech?” He would say, “I want to emphasize where we are in the commitments we’ve made to Europe, what we’re doing in terms of increasing or decreasing defense, our education initiatives are certainly important, we ought to talk a little bit about the impact the Clean Air bill is having.” So he talks about what he wants.

342. Note, James W. Cicconi to Director Darman, January 30, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

343. Memo, J. S. Bybee to Chriss Winston, “State of the Union,” January 30, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

344. Meeting Minutes, Meeting with Speechwriters, January 16, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990, Case No. 115224 to Case No. 197301, box 34. George Bush Presidential Library.

Then he goes over these and he indicates some preferences, and sometimes he may even craft an outline, although I think George Bush probably did less of that than other Presidents. Then you take this and you assign a head speechwriter to do the first draft. ... This is the document, then, that is reflecting the priorities as established by the President, what he wants to emphasize and the best recommendations of his best and brightest advisors ... You go over it with him and then he tells you what he really likes and what he doesn't like in it. And sometimes you have the speechwriter there for that draft, sometimes you don't. But let's assume you do. So the speechwriter comes in. The speechwriter is writing frantically, trying to keep the notes of the details, and he hears the President say a nice phrase about this and a nice phrase about that and if the speechwriter is any good he will capture some of the President's spontaneous phrases on issues, because he wants to capture him into the speech.³⁴⁵

With the assistance of the speechwriter, the President edited the draft and subsequently the long process of reconciling the interests of the Cabinet members began, followed by extensive editing and clearance,

Darman is in there doing his bit, Cicconi is in there doing his bit. Dave Demarest now has a copy, the communications director, Marlin Fitzwater has a copy. Now it's a decent enough copy to go to maybe ten of the key staffers and they share it with anybody on their staff that is appropriate for them to do so. And it comes back. All the time, I'm keeping a checklist, if you will, Agriculture's got two goodies in there, Labor has one goody. I want to make sure that no Cabinet officer feels left out by the President. Now I have to balance for the President happiness amongst the Cabinet. As well as getting his message across, this still has a scorecard of psychological stroking for the Cabinet and so you do that. ... And this is really a two-month process ... maybe a three-month process for the State of the Union. Then it's almost finished and you have to have it vetted by the people whose stuff you put in there. Every State of the Union address gets so edited it becomes almost sterile.

³⁴⁵ Miller Center. "Interview with John H. Sununu (06/2000)." Recorded interview by Sid Milkis. University of Virginia. June 8–9, 2000, retrieved on June 18, 2012 from, <http://millercenter.org-/president/bush/oralhistory/john-sununu-1>.

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It’s everything for everybody in there.³⁴⁶

Assistant to the President for Economic and Domestic Policy Roger B. Porter coordinated the President’s speech preparations throughout the Bush’s presidency.³⁴⁷ The job of the SOTU coordinator involved several key activities. The process began with Porter’s request for submissions of ideas and proposals for the State of the Union. Heads or administrators of various government departments and agencies were asked to submit inserts to the SOTU, review the department’s accomplishments and problems. In the Bush White House, Edith (Ede) E. Holiday served as Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and Secretary of the Cabinet. In the capacity of the White House liaison with his Cabinet and all federal agencies, Holiday requested the Cabinet’s views on the President Bush’s State of the Union.³⁴⁸

Porter was particularly interested in the things that the President should articulate in that address “with respect to assessing the past year and with respect to charting the coming year, and indeed, his vision for the 1990s,”³⁴⁹ and in specific policy initiatives that an agency or department would propose to articulate in the SOTU. Porter’s job also involved meeting key Administration officials, including Samuel Skinner, Secretary of Transportation or Education Secretary Lauro F. Cavazos to discuss their ideas and suggestions for the President’s SOTU.³⁵⁰ Most of those meetings took place in December.³⁵¹

346. *Ibid.*

347. Memo, David Q. Bates Jr. to Catalina V. Villalpando, January 25, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

348. Memo, Ede Holiday to Brent Scowcroft, “State of the Union,” December 14, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: [CF] SP 230-90 State of the Union 1990 Case No. 113615 to Case No. 270774, box 34. George Bush Presidential Library.

349. Letter, Roger B. Porter to Richard H. Truly, December 14, 1989, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

350. Memo, Roger Porter to Samuel K. Skinner, December 11, 1989, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990, Case No. 115224 to Case No. 197301, box 34. George Bush Presidential Library.

351. Memo, Roger B. Porter to Lauro F. Cavazos, December 20, 1989, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6], Case

Before the actual drafting of the SOTU began, Roger Porter would be provided with inputs for the Address.³⁵² Under President Bush, the National Security Council would develop the foreign affairs section of his SOTU.³⁵³ Porter also requested submissions of ideas for the 1991 budget and State of the Union cycle in staff meeting which must have taken place in the last days of October or first days of November.³⁵⁴ In consultation with National Security Council staff, Secretaries Baker and Cheney were asked to submit a memo on that topic. Their memoranda were to be sent directly to Scowcroft, “rather than be folded into the domestic review that Roger Porter” was conducting. Secretary Cheney, however, would rather discuss his views directly with Scowcroft.³⁵⁵ For his 1991 SOTU, President Bush’s Chief of Staff Chino Chapa requested submission of ideas for the President’s State of the Union “and the broader domestic policy agenda” on November 13.³⁵⁶ In a long memorandum to Governor Sununu, dated December 30, 1990, Roger B. Porter presented State of the Union Address themes. The memo was a result of Porter’s discussions with major executive departments and agencies regarding their ideas and suggestions for the consideration for inclusion in the President’s State of the Union. These discussions, Porter admitted, “yielded both much consensus and the expected interest.”³⁵⁷ This memorandum served as a starting point

No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

352. Memo, Constance Berry Newman to Roger Porter, “Proposed Text for State of the Union,” January 8, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990, Case No. 115224 to Case No. 197301, box 34. George Bush Presidential Library.

353. Draft, McGroarty/Dooley Draft #2, January 18, 1990, 5:45 P.M., folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

354. Memo, Hanns Kuttner to Roger B. Porter, “Ideas/Themes for Budget/State of the Union Cycle,” November 4, 1990, folder: Open P2/P5 Documents, Documents 15,301–15,550, box 55. George Bush Presidential Library.

355. Memo, Ede Holiday to Brent Scowcroft, “State of the Union,” December 14, 1990, WHORM: Subject File—CF, Bush Presidential Records, folder: [CF] SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 Case No. 113615 to Case No. 270774, box 34. George Bush Presidential Library.

356. Memo, Michael L. Williams to Chino Chapa, “State of the Union Briefing Part II,” November 29, 1990, folder: Open P2/P5 Documents, Documents 10,101–10,450, box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

357. Memo, Roger B. Porter to Governor Sununu, “State of the Union Address: Themes,”

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for drafting the outline of the SOTU on December 31, 1990.³⁵⁸

A memorandum from David Demarest to Chief of Staff Sam Skinner on “State of the Union (SOTU) Preparation Schedule,” suggests a thought through organization of the SOTU efforts: President Bush’s 1992 SOTU was planned to be developed between January 20, 1992 when a comprehensive outline was to be drafted and forwarded to the core SOTU group that included: the President, Vice President, Chief of Staff, Scowcroft, Darman, Boskin, and Porter, and January 28 when the speech would be delivered following the incorporation of the President’s final comments, rehearsal in family theater and application of makeup. In the meantime, the SOTU drafts would develop and be circulated between the President and the core SOTU group. After the comments from core group were reconciled, the draft would be forwarded to the President, loaded on a teleprompter and rehearsed.³⁵⁹

Although typically, ideas were sought from the Administration officials in developing the overall themes and specific initiatives,³⁶⁰ under President Bush, as also the preparation schedule illustrates, the locus of decision in policy development was moved out of the hands of the departments toward “close to presidential or presidential staff control.”³⁶¹ The SOTU core group usually

December 30, 1990, folder: State of the Union1991, 1/29/91, Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 81. George Bush Presidential Library.

358. *Ibid.*

359. Memo, David Demarest to Sam Skinner, “State of the Union (SOTU) Preparation Schedule, January 18, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case Number 312306 to case no 315632, box 38. George Bush Presidential Library.

360. Memo, Roger B. Porter to James B. Busey, January 17, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case No. 301022 to Case No. 301802, box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

Memo, Porter to Edward R. Madigan, January 17, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case No. 301960 to Case No. 302829, box 39. George Bush Presidential Library.

Memo, Nicholas Rostow to Brent Scowcroft, “State of the Union Speech,” January 9, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case No. 301892SS, box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

361. Miller Center, “Interview with David Q. Bates Jr.,” University of Virginia, September 21–22, 2000, retrieved on June 18, 2012 from <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/oralhistory/david-bates>.

included the White House staff. Bates' role would involve "significant liaison between the Cabinet members involved and Roger Porter." As in previous years, comments on the drafts were sought from the Vice President Quayle, Skinner, Scowcroft, Darman, Fitzwater, Gray, McClure, Porter and Boskin, and they were delivered to David Demarest.³⁶² The morning, 7:30 A.M. draft of January 28, 1992 was the draft seen by the President.³⁶³ As January 28, 8:00 A.M. draft demonstrates, it was typical of the Bush staff to refer to the fact sheet on the SOTU as a draft. Like with a regular text-draft, comments were to be forwarded to D. Demarest's office by 11:00 A.M., January 28.³⁶⁴ Action was requested mainly from Darman, Scowcroft, Demarest, Grey, McClure, Porter, Smith and Boskin. Also, Bob Grady and the Office of Management and Budget commented on the revised version of the SOTU draft.³⁶⁵ These comments were to be forwarded directly to Demarest in the West Wing. The comments by the Office of Management and Budget were minor.³⁶⁶ On January 28, 1992, Counsel to the President—C. Boyden Grey—submitted to David Demarest a banking bill insert for the State of the Union, which called Congress to enact banking reform legislation in 1992. That idea was endorsed by the President and Fred McClure.³⁶⁷

362. White House Briefing Memorandum, "Presidential Address: State of the Union (Revised Version) U. S. Capitol, House Chamber," January 27, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case Number 301892SS [5], box 39. George Bush Presidential Library.

363. Draft, State of the Union Draft, 7:30 A.M., January 28, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992, Case Number 301892 [2], box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

364. January 28, 8:00 A.M. Draft, January 28, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case Number 301892SS [6], box 37. George Bush Presidential Library.

365. White House Staffing Memorandum, "Presidential Address: State of the Union (Revised Version) U. S. Capitol, House Chamber, January 28, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992, Case Number 301892 + case number 301892SS[3], box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

366. Draft with Bob Grady's and OMB's comments, 7:30 A.M. draft, January 28, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992, Case Number 301892 + case number 301892SS[3], box 36. George Bush Presidential Library.

367. Note, C. Boyden Grey to David Demarest, January 28, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992,

Assessment

The Bush presidency marks a change in the relations between the President and his speechwriters, which affected the drafting process of Bush’s SOTUS. President Bush’s writers had limited access to the President. It was not until the Bush presidency that speechwriting became the main occupation of Bush’s SOTU drafters. That development is also reflected in the organization of the speechwriting operations and the content of the SOTUS. Specifically, under President Bush drafting was undertaken by a team of different speechwriters each year and the SOTUS dealt mainly with the discussion of values and principles of the Bush Administration. Those values and principles were not necessarily, however, linked to specific policies as means to ends. They often were the ends. Bush’s SOTUS were predominantly thematic, not programmatic, and thus short on policy initiatives and legislative proposals. This was perhaps due to Bush’s “sceptic[ism] of government solutions to domestic problems and antagoni[sm] toward government regulations,”³⁶⁸ which translated into “a minimalist domestic agenda.”³⁶⁹ Bush’s thematic rather than programmatic SOTUS are only indirectly consequences of the organization of the SOTU speechwriting operations; mainly, they are a reflection of Bush’s non-legislative approach to presidential leadership, and as other scholars put it, Bush’s “tentativeness with anything that might risk the enlargement of government,”³⁷⁰ and his “lack of commitment to political ideas and programmes.”³⁷¹ The SOTU speechwriting operations in the Bush White House illustrate how policymaking and speechwriting had gone separate ways. Speechwriters did not generate policy input; they were not presidential top advisors who also crafted speeches. Although ideas for Bush’s SOTUS were sought from the federal departments, the core policy group would con-

Case Number 301892SS [4], box 31. George Bush Presidential Library.

368. Dan Quale, *Standing Firm. A Vice-Presidential Memoir* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), 94.

369. Dilys M. Hill, “Domestic Policy,” in *The Bush Presidency. Triumphs and Adversities*, ed. Dilys M. Hill and Phil Williams (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 134.

370. Micheal Foley, “The President and Congress,” *ibid.*, 59.

371. “Introduction: The Bush Administration—An Overview,” *ibid.*, 4.

sist of the White House staff, the Office of Management and Budget and the Council of Economic Advisers.

CONCLUSIONS

The central aim of Chapter Two was to address the two types of questions: 1) who generates policy input for the State of the Union Addresses, and 2) what is the role of key presidential speechwriters, and how well these individuals were linked to the White House policy processes. While, in general, policy input may be generated by the Cabinet, the White House staff and top presidential aides, whether their input would be integrated into the Soru depended on the President's decision and the role assumed by presidential speechwriters. In each of the five presidencies under study, Soru speechwriting was organized differently, but also certain similarities emerge in the organization of speechwriting under Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford and Bush in terms of speechwriting style and the integration of policymaking with speechwriting.

The speechwriter's role is ultimately what the President allows him to make of it. Two organizational patterns emerge from the analysis of speechwriting: speechwriting was either *centralized* in one key speechwriter responsible for managing the flow of ideas submitted to the White House and the actual drafting, or *decentralized*, with responsibility diffused among the key speechwriter, speech coordinators, and other assistants. The closer the relationship between the speechwriter and the President, the more centralized speechwriting. Ted Sorensen represents the centralized style. Under Johnson and Ford speechwriting was most decentralized. While under LBJ the decentralization reflected an organizational style with specific individuals held responsible for carrying out specific functions, decentralization under Ford was a consequence of a failure of the speechwriting infrastructure. Eisenhower's and Bush's writers fall somewhere between these two extremes, incorporating ingredients of both organizational patterns and including their own idiosyncrasies.

Ted Sorensen was Kennedy's chief domestic advisor whose role as Spe-

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cial Counsel also involved speechwriting. Sorensen coordinated SOTU efforts and was responsible for crafting the messages and developing the domestic portions, including budget and fiscal policy field of Kennedy’s SOTUS. Presidential senior advisors Walter Heller, John Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger and Walt Rostow were charged with drafting the economic, foreign and defense portions of the SOTU, respectively. Sorensen’s role was to incorporate policy-specific feeds into the SOTU. His operations, however, had no parallel to other staffers in that he had policy knowledge, was an able writer and coordinator of the speechwriting operations. Sorensen also enjoyed an unfettered access to the President. These factors had significant impact on shortening the normally arduous drafting process. For Sorensen working jointly with other writers was a waste of time. The clearance process was shortened as Sorensen would send only pertinent portions of the draft to relevant agencies and departments.

Similar to Ted Sorensen under Kennedy, Robert Hartmann served as Ford’s top political adviser and the head of the speechwriting unit. The formulation of policies and programs of the Ford Administration during the SOTU process was assigned to the Domestic Council, which, although controlled by Vice President Rockefeller, consisted of the majority of the Administration’s Secretaries. Policy-making under Ford was thus more Cabinet-oriented, rather than White House-oriented. While Sorensen’s speechwriting organization was a success, Hartmann’s was a failure. Despite the fact that Hartmann was a member of the SOTU coordinating group, participated in discussion meetings with the senior White House staff including the Domestic Council, the Economic Policy Board, the Office of Management and Budget and the Council of Economic Advisers, early drafts produced by Hartmann were weak, rhetorical, and short on specifics. Hartmann also lacked Sorensen’s managerial skills. Ford’s SOTU drafts had far too many editors. Also, a combination of texts from different speechwriting teams, as happened under President Ford, unnecessarily slowed down and complicated the SOTU process. Endless revisions and edits, competition, chaos and randomness characterized the speechwriting process under Hartmann. Ford’s speechwriting organization lacked discipline, planning, and coordination of responsibilities. Speechwriters were competitive but not necessarily competent. In consequence of their

competitiveness and de facto the lack of central speechwriting coordinating authority, eventually, the President had to carry the burden of completing his State of the Unions on his own, only hours prior to its presentation to Congress. President Ford's case illustrates quite vividly how the President's fate is determined by his own efforts in addition to the quality of his staff.

Unlike Sorensen under Kennedy and Hartmann under Ford, Bryce Harlow did not serve as both a speechwriter and a policy adviser under President Eisenhower. The major subject areas of Eisenhower's State of the Unions would be written by various members of the Cabinet and the White House staff. Under both Eisenhower and Ford, however, the Cabinet was more influential in formulating policies and recommendations for the President. Under Bryce Harlow, speechwriting was brought into the mainstream of policymaking. Harlow had a substantial influence on the policy by deciding what and how the solicited material would be incorporated into the Address. He also spent plenty of time in the President's presence and participated in policy meetings, so that he would be able to write a policy speech. He wanted to be able to understand the President's thinking, speaking style and technique, his normal conversation, or his voice.

While under Kennedy, Ted Sorensen would act as a counsel, speechwriter, and coordinator of the SOTU efforts, under LBJ those multiple functions would be split among several people. Johnson's speechwriting infrastructure was decentralized yet controlled, unlike under President Ford. The process of soliciting materials and composing the Address was much longer, involving separate coordinators of submissions for domestic and foreign policy sections; task forces, a long trail of area-specific drafts, rather than brief recommendations and, as was the case with LBJ's 1966 SOTU, two speechwriters, or even a committee of drafters in 1967. Moreover, drafters of Johnson's SOTUS changed annually or biannually. LBJ's six State of the Unions were drafted by four different major drafters: Ted Sorensen, Bob Goodwin, Bill Moyers, and Harry McPherson and several speechwriting assistants. For Moyers speechwriting was not his main occupation; he was first of all presidential top line aide who would also assist the President in drafting speeches. Although under LBJ specialized speechcrafters would be employed in the White House, policy-

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makers would not cease to dominate the process of shaping the contents of Johnson’s State of the Unions. The heads of agencies and departments would participate already in preliminary discussion of legislation with the White House staff.

One of the negative developments associated with the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency, as already mentioned, is the appearance of specialized writers or wordsmiths in the White House. President Bush’s writers were most estranged from policy formation process and his State of the Unions were drafted by a team of different writers every year. Bush’s writers did not serve as presidential top aides. In addition, the role of the speechwriter was also separated from the role of the speech coordinator, which further increased the distance between the men and women who crafted the President’s Mother Speech, as the SOTU is dubbed, and the President. Similarly to Valenti and Califano under LBJ, Roger Porter served as a coordinator under President Bush. SOTU drafts were for formal close staff holding and policymaking was rather White House oriented. The reliance on writers who changed annually, rather than presidential top aides with a gift for writing, suggests a decreased interest of the Bush Administration in producing policy-oriented Addresses. Bush’s thematic and largely ceremonial SOTUS are not necessarily direct effects of such negative developments associated with the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency as the appearance of wordsmiths in the White House. Rather, they reflect the President’s attitude to rhetoric and communication. Bush’s SOTUS were simply not meant to be his Mother Speeches. For Bush, the presidency was not a bully pulpit and he was not the legislator in chief.

Despite differences, the essence of the speechwriter’s job in the process of producing the State of the Unions may be compared to that of a carpenter who arduously shapes, cuts and carves by hand the diverse material submitted to him and sometimes also generated by him. The fact that generically the SOTU is an intermixture of deliberative and ceremonial rhetoric is reflected in the composition of the SOTU staff. Perhaps with the exception of Bush’s writers, individuals charged with drafting the SOTUS were predominantly idea men with a talent for writing. Their area of responsibility was far greater than merely reducing someone else’s ideas to paper. These people often

shaped government policies. Importantly, policymakers did not cease to dominate the SOTU process. The drafting process was an occasion for policy deliberation throughout the investigated period. Policy experts would generate and develop policy proposals and speechwriters with facility with words and policy understanding would present them in a persuasive way.

CHAPTER THREE

“THE WORK HE CANNOT ESCAPE”: PRESIDENTIAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE STATE OF THE UNION PREPARATORY PROCESS FROM DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER TO GEORGE H. W. BUSH

“This kind of work [producing public statements, including State of the Unions] is very exciting. It requires the most laborious and extended research and study, and the most careful and painstaking thought. ... It is an important part of the work of a President which he can not escape. It is inherent in the office.”

Calvin Coolidge¹

Unlike his successors, President Wilson never employed a speechwriter, “[e]very word this man uttered was written by one man—himself.”² For Wilson the President was the voice of the nation, and this voice was most important for governing. Because of the high demand for the President’s

1. Calvin Coolidge, *An Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge* (New York: Cosmopolitan Book Corporation, 1929), 220.

2. Gene Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), 131.

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speech, the President may be assisted by speechwriters he does not know and be forced to deliver speeches that were crafted without his guidance and assistance. The State of the Union, however, is the Mother Speech. The President is inescapably involved in determining the programs that are going to be included in the State of the Union Address.³ The key question is the nature of the President’s involvement in the SOTU process and access to the President.

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER: THE HANDS-ON EDITOR

The picture of President Eisenhower’s capacity of the English language and his involvement in speechwriting activities is full of contradictions. Robert Kieve, a former editor of *Life*, who served as Special Assistant in the White House between 1953 and 1955, and who was involved in doing some background research of details for the President’s speeches admired the President’s sensitivity of style and “enormous capacity” for editing of which most people simply are completely unaware of,

The general public thinks of him as a grandfatherly old man who had no concept of the English language, no interest in it, no feeling for the precision of words, no capacity for determining when a sentence ended and when it began, no knowledge of paragraphing or of organization, and yet in all of these things, he had a greater capacity than anybody I’ve ever known. ... Absolute pedant with the English language. Insufferable.⁴

Eisenhower enjoyed the opinion among his staff of being an excellent and demanding editor of his speeches.⁵ Of note may be the fact that in the ’30s,

3. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2, 94.

4. Interview with Robert S. Kieve by Dr. Thomas Soapes, 8, retrieved on March 11, 2007 from http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/Oral_Histories/oral_history_transcripts/Kieve_Robert_411.pdf.

5. Williams, Interview, 19. President Eisenhower was remembered by the members of his staff as a very demanding editor, who occasionally overworked big speeches. The number of drafts may have grown up to fifteen or seventeen drafts of one speech. This fact may have implications for research. Sometimes several drafts of speeches never made it and there may

Eisenhower was chief aide and speechwriter for General Douglas MacArthur.⁶ President Eisenhower was best at sharpening and shortening speech drafts written for him by his speechwriters. He would take poetic words out of his speeches and substitute them with shorter and more functional ones. As Eisenhower explained his speechwriter Arthur Larson his rationale for introducing numerous changes on the drafts of his 1958 SOTU, “At heart you must understand that I am an editor; no written text appeals to me until I have inserted my own particular mannerisms of style.”⁷

Dwight D. Eisenhower’s involvement in the State of the Union preparation, however, would not be limited to the role of an editor. Particularly during his first term in office, President Eisenhower participated in the SOTU process from the beginning to the end.⁸ Evidence shows that throughout his presidency, Eisenhower would contribute to the process in many ways; from initiating the spadework, providing a conceptual framework for developing his SOTUS, and editing them. The President was responsible for initiating the annual programming process that led to the presentation of his major 1954 SOTU. Also in subsequent years, Eisenhower’s involvement was quite active and personal.

At the Cabinet Meeting at Camp David in mid-August of 1954, the President called the attention to the fact that “already we are again at the time of the year when we have to crank up machinery on the 1955 State of the Union Message. The spade work has to be started now to formulate a new legislative program and to provide the foundation for this message which, all of you know, is our most important public document of the year.”⁹ The President

be fewer drafts deposited in the Eisenhower Library than actually drafted.

6. Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982), 11.

7. Letter, Dwight D Eisenhower to Arthur Larson, 13 January 1958. In Dwight Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, doc. 526, retrieved on March 3, 2007 from <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/second-term/documents/526.cfm>.

8. Ralph Williams Jr. to Patrick J. Haney. April 6, 1988. Folder: Letters, 1985–88 Williams, Ralph E.: Papers, 1958–60 Box 1/2. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

9. Cabinet Meeting, August 13, 1954. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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also announced that “in a short while” each of the Cabinet members would “receive a letter asking that you begin the preparation of recommendations for your part of this message.”¹⁰ Eisenhower expected that the departmental material for inclusion in the SOTU would have been submitted to his staff “by no later than the middle of October.” And that each Cabinet member would “give this matter the highest priority within your own Department and your very personal attention, because it does involve our new program which we will lay before the country and the Congress next January, and it is the essential first step in the long, laborious procedure which results in the State of the Union message.”¹¹

In general, under Eisenhower the process of preparation of the State of the Union began with first discussing with the President the type of message that he wanted to end up with after the “agonizing procedure” of drafting and editing the message was completed. The SOTU’s length and the major thrusts that the President wanted to deal with were also discussed.¹² The President did not sift through all of the submissions by himself, but he was inescapably involved in determining the programs that were going to be included in his SOTU. A lot of sifting was done by the Bureau of the Budget, then by the White House Staff, and then by the President. The President would also deal directly with Cabinet Officers, who attempted to convince him as to the importance of including some program in his Address. For Eisenhower, the ideal SOTU should not exceed 40 minutes and should try to avoid going into every detail of a program or try to capture every program of the Administration. He thought that such an approach was a mistake that confused rather than enlightened the country. Masses of material accumulated in the White House would have to be eliminated.

An important stage in the preparatory process was to decide, and that decision was made by the President, “the center of emphasis in his message.”¹³ As Bryce Harlow remembered, “[t]remendous discussions take place, involving

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2, 92.

13. Ibid., 95.

the President and his staff, on just that basic point ... which is, what is the essential theme which should be stressed at this point in the history of our country? What is that we should stress? That is perhaps the most difficult aspect of preparing the messages.”¹⁴ The President would have to consider the priorities of his Administration and what it sought to accomplish; what purpose would be comprehensible by the American people.¹⁵ Once the theme was agreed upon, consultations followed. President Eisenhower would also consult with the congressional leaders, not to get their approval, but to inform them of the President’s program that he was going to submit.¹⁶

It is unavoidable that the President be assisted in the orderly assignment of priorities. Evidence shows, however, that long before anyone would contribute any specific feed to the SOTU, the President himself would recognize and address the problems that may have had an impact on the departments’ recommendations. For example, only after seven months in office, in the beginning of August 1953, the President would write to the heads of agencies and departments to encourage them “to attack the problem [of inefficiency and government spending] with renewed vigor.” President Eisenhower would initiate some thinking in each department or agency by directing prompt action on the existing problem of inefficiency:

It is absolutely essential that you begin immediately to take every possible step progressively to reduce the expenditures of your Department during the fiscal year 1954 ... to make substantial reductions in your requests for new appropriations and in the level of your expenditures for the fiscal year 1955 ... emphasize a critical review and maximum feasible reductions in your requests for new appropriations and in the level of your expenditures in areas which have attracted the attention and concern of the Congress and of the public as possible sources of waste, inefficiency, duplication, and excessive or non-essential costs.¹⁷

14. *Ibid.*, 96.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, 97.

17. Dwight D. Eisenhower to all heads of Agencies and Departments, August 6, 1953. Folder: State of the Union—1955—Possible Background Material and Miscellaneous Suggestions (2) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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By mid-November 1953, the President decided that he would deliver his 1954 SOTU personally.¹⁸ The President’s letter to his brother Milton illustrates that the President had a thought through vision of what should be included in his SOTU. That vision included specific suggestions for each section of his Address: review foreign problems and statement of policies that were to be pursued (State Department), review the US financial position (Treasury Department), the problems it inherited, and the progress that had been made. The objective of the Eisenhower Administration was to balance the budget, “but not at the expense of neglecting needful functions, especially security.” The message would also stress economy and efficiency in government. The special emphasis of the defense section of the message (Defense Department) was on strategic thinking power and continental defense against atomic attack. With respect to law enforcement (Department of Justice), the President wanted to stress measures for protecting the government against security risks, improving law enforcement measures and strengthening law enforcement agencies under Federal control and increase the number of judges and salaries for judges and US attorneys. President’s objective for the Post Office Department and the Interior Department was to include “some punchy, strongly stated principles of governmental responsibility, shared by the citizen and by the community and the state.”¹⁹

As the Address started to evolve from the President’s desires and the assembled material into drafts, they would come in from the writing establishment back to the President personally. The President would have to divert time for the analysis, severe editing of the draft, rejecting or redoing some parts. As Bryce Harlow noted, the President “would change it, actually, up to the time that he got up to deliver it. He would change it in the car on the way to the Capitol, like as not.”²⁰ General Wilton B. Persons, who was involved

18. Robert J. Donovan, *Eisenhower: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1956), 171.

19. Memo, Dwight David Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, November 6, 1953. Folder: State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

20. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #2, 101.

in the preparation of the President's SOTU, remembered a story, which helps illustrate the President's involvement in the speechwriting operations,

... one time on a Sunday when the President was going over it and—he never was satisfied with anything, any speech, he ever made. He'd sit in the back of the car with a red pencil and a black pencil and make changes on the way to the Capitol Hill. That of course would throw Jim Haggerty in kind of a rough spot because he'd already issued the thing to the press some half hour before. ... One Sunday, I remember very definitely. Fourteen different copies were sent out to my house during that day and a good part of that night.²¹

In early December 1953, President Eisenhower sent Hauge “several tentative paragraphs for the opening of the State of the Union speech for his consideration.”²² The President did not want his input to be accepted by Hauge merely because he wrote it.²³ The first three pages of the draft written by the President touched upon the shift of power in 1953 and the young Administration, whose “life was measured in hours and days rather than in months and years.” Thus,

[i]n these circumstances, the logical purpose of an Administration ... was to present a general statement in the several categories of governmental responsibility, including the description of purposes, objectives, and basic approach of the new Administration. Some analysis of inherited problems and situations was possible and was presented in my former message. Where there existed obvious

21. OH #399. Oral History Interview with General Wilton B. Persons by Stephen J. Wayne, May 29, 1974: 6–7. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

22. Memo, Dwight David Eisenhower to Bryce Harlow, December 3, 1953. Folder: Draft #2, 12/1/53. State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Eisenhower's handwriting on these pages was illegible mainly due to a very small middle zone of letters in a word, rapid, small and often expansive handwriting, and unclear formation of letters, which in extreme cases reminded a curved line.

23. “This is for your consideration. It is not to be accepted merely because I wrote it.” Memo, Dwight David Eisenhower to Dr. Hauge including Draft #2, 12/1/53. December 1, 1953. Folder: State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D.: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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need for legislation, suitable recommendations were included, but in the larger sense there was a clear need for study, evaluation, and the proper organization of appropriate conclusions before a complete program representing the specific convictions of the Administration could be presented to the Congress.²⁴

Although this paragraph did not survive to the final draft of Eisenhower’s 1954 SOTU, the President must have thought that some justification of his limited legislative agenda in 1953 was necessary. Following Eisenhower’s first SOTU, the President was criticized for not offering a detailed and comprehensive program to Congress. After President Truman presented Congress with an elaborate inventory of programs in his SOTUS, Congress came to expect “the elaborate paraphernalia of a comprehensive and specific inventory, contents settled and defined as regards substance no less than finance, presented in detailed fashion and packaged form at the opening of each session of Congress”²⁵ In spite of an early start on the Address, around Christmas ’53 the President got “appalled at the work already stacked up on the State of the Union Message ... and concerned with the work that would still have to be carried out on the speech.”²⁶ The 1954 SOTU was a major effort and the President would seek improvements on his ’54 message until the last days of the process.

After the President became satisfied with the text of the SOTU, he would make revisions, which would accommodate his wishes, both as to style and presentation. Eisenhower also specified numerous editorial changes and called for rephrasing in content, and modification in format. President Eisenhower would also edit the first draft of the foreign policy section.²⁷ Overall, however,

24. Memo, Dwight David Eisenhower to Bryce Harlow, December 3, 1953. Folder: Draft #2, 12/1/53. State of the Union 1/7/54 (3) Eisenhower Dwight D. Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech Series, Box 6. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

25. Richard E. Neustadt, “Presidency and Legislation: Planning the President’s Program,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Dec., 1955): 981.

26. Note, Eisenhower, Dwight D.: Papers as President, NSC Series (Ann Whitman File), box 5, 176th Meeting of NSC, Dec. 16, 1953. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

27. Draft #1, President’s edits, December 16, 1953. Folder: Drafts—State of the Union, December 1953 (10), Harlow Records, Box 10. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

the President's remarks on the drafts were scarce. If there were any, they were limited to single words, or ticking *V* for approval. When the President came across a passage, which in his judgment was not clear, he would either mark it as "unclear" or simply underline that passage.²⁸ The only substantial addition made on the draft by the President was the opening paragraph that included a reference to the transfer of power from the Democratic to the Republican President: "When eleven months ago, I last presented to the Congress my views on the State of the Union, then the conduct of government had just been transferred, for the first time in two decades, from one of our great political parties to the other."²⁹ This passage was dropped as the SOTU developed. A day or two before the delivery, he would have the draft read by Harlow at a Cabinet meeting to see if any member of the Cabinet "found any particular fault with the total document or with the area of interest to his Cabinet area."³⁰ Comments contributed by members of the Cabinet did not necessarily result in change. By that stage, Harlow admitted,

... any President is rather tired of working with his State of the Union Message. These are documents that are awfully difficult to prepare. And a President has to lay a great deal of time and effort against them. And when it gets close to the delivery time of a State of the Union Message, most of the language in it has gone irretrievably into concrete, and it takes a mighty violent explosion to dislodge it.³¹

The final editing was scheduled for "noon or shortly after," on January 31.³² Evidence shows that the President still "dictated revisions on most of the State of the Union to shorten it and make it more readable."³³ In the early years

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Oral History Interview with Bryce N. Harlow #3: 142.

31. Ibid.

32. Memorandum, E. J. H. to Ezra Taft Benson, January 31, 1953. Folder: Speeches—state of Union Draft Copy (2). Eisenhower Dwight David: Papers as President of the United States, Ann Whitman File, Speech File, Box 3. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

33. Memorandum, E. J. H. to Herbert Brownell Jr., January 31, 1953. Folder: Speeches—state of Union Draft Copy (2). Eisenhower Dwight David: Papers as President of the United

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of his presidency, Eisenhower would be involved in the range of activities during the SOTU preparatory process. He would contribute comments on the drafts, meet with his Cabinet members, make notes and ask questions.³⁴

President Eisenhower’s involvement in generating ideas for his speeches changed as time went by. Following the President’s heart attack in the fall of 1955, Eisenhower did not make any initial attempts on the draft of the 1956 SOTU, but he would be involved in the process from his hospital room. The President would see General Persons, Kevin McCann, Governor Adams on October 26 for 35–40 minutes. At the meeting, McCann would read the first 12½ pages of the draft while the President would comment on it.³⁵ He would make the whole range of comments on this draft of his 1956 SOTU, from substantial comments on foreign policy to suggestions on cutting specific sections. Eisenhower did not like details and specific figures. He preferred statements, such as “something under three million,” rather than figure of two million eight hundred fifty thousand.” The President also liked to have the speech divided into clear sections. Cardinal numbers were used in the middle of pages to separate speech sections. Arthur Larson “tried to stick to words of one syllable as far as possible.”³⁶

For Eisenhower, as Fred Greenstein pointed out, “verbal expression was his instrument; he refused to indulge his obvious pleasure in analytic thought and clear expression as an end in itself.”³⁷ The process of crafting Eisenhower’s ’56 SOTU demonstrates the President’s penchant for clarity through active involvement in editing. Eisenhower would go “over the several drafts on the paragraph” to which Adams referred in his December 31 teletype to

States, Ann Whitman File, Speech File, Box 3. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

34. Dictation, Re: State of the Union Message: Notes Dictated by Tom Stephens, January 1, 1955. Folder: State of the Union-1955-Cabinet Draft (3) Harlow Records, 1953–61, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

35. President’s notes on draft of State of the Union message. Folder: State of the Union January 1956 (3). Eisenhower Dwight David.: Papers as President of the United States, 1953–61, (Ann Whitman File), Speech Series, Box 14. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

36. Memo, Arthur Larson to Mr. Moos, December 2, 1958. Folder: State of Union 1959, Larson, Arthur: Papers 1932—93. Box 5. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

37. Greenstein, *Hidden-Hand Presidency*, 66.

the President.³⁸ By December 16, the Cabinet had decided to recommend the elimination of any direct reference to a possible tax cut. Informed by memorandum of the Cabinet's decision, Eisenhower wrote in the margin, "I believe in this one."³⁹ What Adams sent the President on December 31 was a result of a long staff conference attended by himself, Arthur Burns, Chapman Rose, George Humphrey, and read to the effect: "With such conditions existing now, I am opposed to any tax cut until it becomes clear there is a surplus to cover it, and that such a tax cut will not preclude the use of some portion of such surplus in the reduction of the public debt . . ." Adams noted that "Humphrey would like to see less emphasis on debt reduction as a prerequisite to tax cut. Other conferees believe this language more accurately reflects your [the President's] philosophy." This paragraph would be included in Eisenhower's January 16 Budget Message to Congress.⁴⁰ On the morning of January 1, 1956, the President edited that paragraph and posted it to Adams. The long paragraph on ways of maintaining fiscal integrity found its way to the final draft.⁴¹ In that paragraph a few lines were contributed by the President and read, "[s]o, in the present state of our financial affairs, I earnestly believe that a tax cut can be deemed justifiable only when it will not unbalance the budget, a budget which makes provision for some reduction, even though modest, in our national debt. In this way we can best maintain fiscal integrity."⁴² The President accepted that edit "wholeheartedly," for it "reflects my views very accurately and minimizes the risk that some statement may be taken out of

38. Memo, Governor Adams to the President, December 31, 1955. Folder: State of the Union, January 1956 (2). Eisenhower, Dwight David.: Papers as President of the United States, (Ann Whitman File) Speech Series, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

39. Memo, Maxwell M. Rabb to the President, Highlights of the Cabinet Meeting of Friday, December 16, 1955. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

40. See *Public Papers of the Presidents: Eisenhower*, 13 and 90.

41. Teletype, Dwight David Eisenhower to Governor Adams, January 1, 1956. Folder: State of the Union, January 1956 (2). Eisenhower, Dwight David.: Papers as President of the United States, (Ann Whitman File) Speech Series, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. The paragraph in question begins with: "It is unquestionably true that our present tax level is very burdensome . . . and ends with: In this way we can best maintain fiscal integrity."

42. *Ibid.*

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the context to create a completely erroneous impression.”⁴³ The President’s speechwriter Ralph Williams pointed out that perhaps once the President knew he would be speaking for the record, he wanted to be sure “that what he said was what he fully intended to say, and how he understood the subject to be communicated.”⁴⁴ Williams noted that the President “suffered so much during his press conferences from his extemporaneous utterances that he wanted to make sure anything in a formal pronouncement got his undivided attention—and it did.”⁴⁵

Following the presidential and congressional elections in 1956, the Eisenhowers vacationed in Augusta from November 26 to December 13.⁴⁶ Typical of this time of the year, the President would decline invitations to vacation at his friends’ houses and ranches for,

[t]he business of getting along with a new Congress, the messages that must be worked over endlessly, the still troubling international situation, the “social” season that I find alarmingly upon me, the visits from foreign dignitaries that have been scheduled (and which I fear I have pushed conveniently into the back of my mind)—all these and many others combine to make the trip we would like to take almost an impossibility.⁴⁷

43. Ibid.

44. Williams, interview, 20.

45. Ibid., 21. As Fred Greenstein points out, however, “in addition to using words as instruments for communicating substance and emotions, Eisenhower also sometimes employed them in a fashion similar to his hidden-hand strategy—to create smoke screens for his actions in his role as covert prime minister. Some of his utterances served to obscure sensitive subjects from public view; others conveyed deliberately ambiguous messages that left him freedom of action. Deliberate use of ambiguity and evasiveness were, of course, not unique to Eisenhower. What distinguished him from other politicians was the ability to leave the impression that such utterances were guileless.” See also Greenstein, *Hidden-Hand Presidency*, 67.

46. Dwight D. Eisenhower To Edgar Newton Eisenhower, 12 November 1956. In Dwight Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, doc. 2092, retrieved on March 4, 2007 from <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/first-term/documents/2092.cfm>.

47. Dwight D. Eisenhower to Floyd Bostwick Odlum and Jacqueline Cochran Odlum, 8 January 1957. In Dwight Eisenhower, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, doc. 2160, retrieved on March 11, 2007 from <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/first-term/documents/2160.cfm>.

Eisenhower felt obliged to be in Washington and oversee the process of producing the speeches, including the State of the Union.⁴⁸ By late December 1956, President called Secretary Dulles to tell that he had read the draft of the SOTU and that the draft had “much good material.” It was, however, longer than he wanted and “not as pungent as he would like from the standpoint of the United States responsibility.”⁴⁹ The President suggested that the draft needed to point out the Soviet progress in developing their own economy into a modern industrial state and the impact of that development on less developed countries. Embracing the Monroe Doctrine, the draft should also stress the importance of the US close relations with other free nations particularly Canada and Mexico, as hostile regimes in these countries would be dangerous to the security of the US. The President also submitted a paragraph on the security of the United States, but it did not make it to the final version of the Address.⁵⁰

Eisenhower’s involvement in the speechwriting process, when Moos and Williams carried out the speechwriting, did not necessarily translate into close interaction with the speechwriters, which was the case when Bryce Harlow was around. At that time, Eisenhower would deal mainly with the principals, not the second tier, which was Williams’ level. Even though Mac Moos was the principal speechwriter, most business of speechwriting in general would be carried out by talking with the President and by mail: floating in and floating back out again without going to the President’s office. In the final years of the Eisenhower presidency, the way things would generally work was that the President may have occasionally passed on to Mac something that he wanted put in his speeches—but for the most part, he wanted his speeches to come up to him as “... ‘completed staff work’: the whole thing laid out tailored to the audience and to be said to the public at that particular time.

48. Memo, J. William Barba to General Persons, November 13, 1956. Folder: State of the Union Message—1957-November, Department Report. Morgan, Gerald D.: Records, 1953–61, Box 26. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

49. Memo, John Foster Dulles to Robert Bowie, December 29, 1956. Folder: State of the Union Message, January 1957 (1). Papers of John Foster Dulles, Draft Presidential Correspondence and Speeches Series, Box 2. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

50. *Ibid.*

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He would look at it and at this point he would begin to think about it. But he needed the full text version to stimulate his own thought processes. The more he would read, the more involved—and intensely involved—he would get. He would get completely immersed in the speech before it was over, and the thing would go anywhere from ten to fifteen drafts.”⁵¹ After all had been laid out, the President’s style would come into the speech,

He would find some things he would throw out and other ideas that he would think about, and he would scribble them into the marginal notes. He’d call in Ann Whitman and he’d dictate maybe two or three pages of new material. And so, draft by draft, it literally became his very own speech, from the beginning to the end. He would edit—not only the textual but substantive material—but he would fiddle with words, and two or three drafts later the same words be back in that he had thrown out in some draft before.⁵²

Williams admitted that the drafts were often overworked, and the major speeches, including the State of the Unions would run from twelve to fifteen drafts. Under Eisenhower, the State of the Union Address was “the product of endless hours of work.”⁵³ Given the amount of time and effort the President devoted to developing the drafts of his SOTUS, he obviously considered them important.

Assessment

President Eisenhower’s involvement in the SOTU process, and particularly during his first term in office, represents a hands-on style of leadership. Eisenhower had a serious approach to responsibilities. Regardless of the circumstances and his health condition, he remained a self-disciplined man, dedicated to work. Despite the fact that President Eisenhower would not deliver his 1956 SOTU in person, Eisenhower stood to the discipline of pro-

51. Williams, interview, 17–18.

52. *Ibid.*, 18.

53. Letter, President to General Robert L. Eichelberger, January 13, 1959. Folder: 20-X-141 State of the Union January 9, 1959. Central Files, President’s Personal File, PPF, Box 662. Con (2). Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

ducing that message. He was intensely involved in the range of activities that included initiating the annual programming process, formulating ideas, determining the programs, and editing drafts. He skillfully combined the role of a decision-maker and an impeccable editor. How was it, then, possible to view Eisenhower as “an aging hero who lacked the energy”⁵⁴ and “let relaxations become part of his image”⁵⁵ while, in fact, he poured such intense energy into his SOTU-related efforts, including editing drafts, on top of a range of other daily routines of the presidency? Why the man who was believed to hold a rather traditional understanding of the separation of powers concept, where Congress is the legislation-making organ, considered the SOTU the most important document of the year and expected his Cabinet members to give it the highest priority? Eisenhower, in fact, used his SOTUS as vehicles through which he asserted himself as the leader in the beginning of the annual programming process. On the one hand, this was, as Richard Neustadt pointed out, a postwar phenomenon started by Harry Truman. The preparation and presentation of a detailed and comprehensive legislative program to Congress was now the major expectation and thus the major effort of the presidency.⁵⁶ As Eisenhower would, in general, deliver his SOTUS in person, he wanted to be comfortable with both their content, language, and style. On the other hand, the dichotomy in perceiving Eisenhower’s style of leadership may be an element of what Fred Greenstein dubbed “the hidden-hand presidency” and Ike’s deliberate effort “to conceal the political side of his leadership.”⁵⁷ His initially close relation with his speechwriter-amanuensis Bryce Harlow changed as time went by. With Harlow no longer in the White House, Eisenhower’s interaction with the speechwriters grew more and more distant.

54. Greenstein, *Hidden-Hand Presidency*, 5.

55. *Ibid.*, 40.

56. Richard E. Neustadt, “Presidency and Legislation: Planning the President’s Program,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Dec., 1955): 981. Eisenhower was criticized for not presenting such a detailed program in 1953.

57. Greenstein, *Hidden-Hand Presidency*, 5.

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JOHN F. KENNEDY: THE INVISIBLE HAND

Describing the President’s involvement in the speechwriting operations, Ted Sorensen stressed that Kennedy “took pains to have a hand in every major presidential paper—not only speeches but letters, messages and proclamations—and he still chose his words and their arrangement with great care. His addresses, including his State of the Unions, “earned him the title of one of the most articulate and eloquent Presidents since Lincoln.”⁵⁸ Tracing JFK’s actual handwriting in the drafts of his State of the Union, however, is a challenge. Rarely any substantial handwritten input could be, without a doubt, attributed to the President. Perhaps precisely that finding may be illustrative of the nature of Kennedy’s involvement in his speeches. Although he was, as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. noted, “a perfectly competent writer, he rarely had time to compose his own speeches.”⁵⁹ Kennedy’s relationship with some of his White House staffers and Ted Sorensen in particular, was “so close,” James N. Giglio noted, “that they communicated effectively with a minimum of conversation.”⁶⁰ This opinion is further reinforced by a story of Kennedy’s involvement in the Budget Message, as told by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget under Kennedy, David E. Bell:

I remember I went into his bedroom at Palm Beach at something like 10:00 on the morning of New Year’s Day of 1962 to close out the budget message with him. I had been all through it with

58. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 330. The association of President Kennedy’s style with President Lincoln may not be incidental. In his obituary article written by Tom Weiner of *The New York Times*, on the day of Sorensen’s death on October 31, 2010, Weiner reminded that in writing his speeches for President Kennedy, Ted Sorensen drew not on the Bible, Thomas Jefferson and Winston Churchill, but on Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Sorensen was born in Lincoln, Nebraska. The state capital was named for the 16th President. “Near the Statehouse stood a statue of Abraham Lincoln and a slab with the full text of the Gettysburg Address. As a child, Mr. Sorensen read it over and over.” See: Tom Weiner, “Theodore C. Sorensen, 82, Kennedy Counselor, Dies,” *The New York Times*, October, 31, 2010, retrieved on October 31, 2010 from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/01/us/01sorensen.html?_r=1.

59. For more information on Kennedy and speeches, see Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days. John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 689–91.

60. James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 30.

Sorensen, and Dillon had signed off, but we needed the President's personal okay. ... He was just waking up and hadn't even had breakfast yet. He sat there with his hair tousled and no pajama jacket. He was a very fast reader, and he ran his eye quickly down the first few pages, made a word change or two, characteristically reducing rather extravagant adjectives to something cooler and more restrained, and then told me it was fine, and that was all there was to it. This seemed to him a perfectly natural and normal way to do business, and it was, for a President, necessarily so. I can confirm, not that it's needed, the President's interest in and facility with words.⁶¹

For President Kennedy, however, eloquence was not an end in itself. In Ted Sorensen's opinion, JFK knew that "words alone meant very little," that "saying so doesn't make it so."⁶² "Words and speeches," Sorensen claimed, "were his medium, not the message;" they were important only if they conveyed an important message.⁶³

The difficulty of tracing the President's personal involvement in speech-writing activities may be in the nature of relationship between President Kennedy and his speechwriter Ted Sorensen. Bell pointed out that the interplay between the two men was "a beautiful thing to watch." It was "constant and continuous."⁶⁴ As time went by, these two men acted like one. Sorensen became Kennedy's confidant and one of his most trusted advisers. In the White House, Ted Sorensen held the title of Special Counsel, but Washington reporters of the era labeled him the President's "intellectual alter ego" and "a lobe of Kennedy's mind."⁶⁵ This special relationship perhaps helps explain the unusually brief drafting process of Kennedy's *Sorus*. What President Kennedy was primarily interested in was the process of reaching a decision:

61. David E. Bell, recorded interview by Robert C. Turner, July 11, 1964: 96–97, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

62. Theodore C. Sorensen, ed., *Let the Word Go Forth: The Speeches, Statements and Writings of John F. Kennedy 1947 to 1963* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1988), 1.

63. *Ibid.*, 2.

64. Bell, recorded interview, 96–97.

65. Tom Weiner, "Theodore Sorensen Dies," retrieved on October 31, 2010 from http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/01/us/01sorensen.html?_r=1.

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He did not want simply to be the fellow who ratified the decision once it was taken. Everything about his Administration reflected his interest. You had the feeling all the time you were working on a problem that he was simultaneously working on it. And he might indeed be asking questions, or asking for material which would lead to a later decision, long before the staff involved, the officers involved, had prepared and were ready to present to him their recommendations. The President was an active participant in the intellectual process that led to decision, and everyone in the White House and all the top officers who reported to him were affected by, and participated in, this same process. Among other things, it meant that you had to be fairly fast on your feet or you might find that the President had been through the question in his own mind and pretty well reached a conclusion before you ever opened your mouth on the subject.⁶⁶

Likely, in Bell’s view, if the President had had time, he could have written his speeches equally well. The President in the many occasions in which Bell saw him work upon messages and speeches “had a very distinctive and strong effect,”

It was quite clear what he wanted to say and how he wanted to say it. As he ran through a speech or message he would be continuously altering phrases or structures, or dropping out paragraphs, or adding new ideas—sort of thinking them out loud as he went along, and Sorensen would seemingly catch them on the fly and in the next draft they would be there word for word as the President had uttered them, even though he had not dictated them in the formal sense to a secretary.⁶⁷

Archival evidence shows that in the process of preparing his *SOTUS*, the President participated in White House Legislative Program meetings with some of his White House staffers and Cabinet members.⁶⁸ The pattern of

66. Bell, recorded interview, 34.

67. *Ibid.*

68. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to the President, December 18, 1962. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63. State of the Union Message 1/14/63 Memoranda 6/14/62—12/26/62. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

preparation for Legislative Program meetings prior to Kennedy's SOTUS is illustrative of, what Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and James N. Giglio observed earlier, namely, the President's dislike for formal, collective meetings both with his White House staff and the Cabinet, and his unwillingness "to delegate executive power outside the Oval Office."⁶⁹ The Legislative Program meetings were scheduled to take place in the White House; Kennedy would review the major items in the legislative program that constituted the basis of his State of the Union and other messages in the presence of Ted Sorensen, Kermit Gordon—new Budget Director, Larry O'Brien and Mike Feldman. Other individuals would gradually be invited for one day. According to Sorensen's schedule, the meetings were to begin on December 26 with a discussion on economy, taxes, debt limit and private pension funds. Secretary Dillon and Walter Heller would be invited to that meeting. Subsequently on December 27, 1962 the discussions on a range of issues, from education, health, air pollution and social security would continue with Secretaries Celebrezze, Cohen and Reppel. Finally, on December 28 discussions would conclude with Secretary Staats present for discussing stockpiling, executive and military pay, supersonic transport, to name a few. Next, between December 29 to December 31, the complete program would be reviewed and there would be off-record press sessions.⁷⁰

In addition, Kennedy was personally involved in collecting opinions on a Food for Peace Program. In the memorandum to Kenneth O'Donnell, the President marked a sentence that he believed might have been useful to O'Donnell in connection with the State of the Union. The memo argued that the Food for Peace Program—described by numerous US politicians and Ambassadors abroad as the US "hottest" overseas effort" was the Administration's "best potential key to the rural heart of America." The greatest farm production success with which American farmers had been blessed could become the

69. For more information on Kennedy's relationship with his Cabinet and the White House staff see James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 30–33.

70. Memo, Theodore C. Sorensen to the President, December 18, 1962. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/14/63 Memoranda 6/14/62—12/26/62. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

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US most appealing New Frontier program. President Kennedy agreed that as far as the US farmers may have been “too individualistic and diverse to agree on a domestic farm program,” they would “applaud the President if he can make them feel that their production is an important international asset.” The overseas school lunch program endorsed in 1962 message was McGovern’s idea and he wanted that proposal to be “the Number One goal of Food for Peace Program.”⁷¹ Evidence shows that after official copies of Kennedy’s 1962 SOTU had been sent to the Press, the President added to his Address an undated two-page, double-sized draft in engrossed font on “New Frontiers.” This addition constituted the two concluding paragraphs of the domestic portion of the Address.⁷²

Assessment

Due to the special nature of President Kennedy’s relation with his speechwriter Ted Sorensen, very little can be said about Kennedy’s actual contribution as a drafter of his annual Addresses. In that sense, JFK was a hands-off man, much less active in the process of drafting. That responsibility was left, literally, in the hands of Ted Sorensen, in whom John Kennedy had full confidence and trust to carry out his role to the best of his ability with little supervision and without interference. Kennedy was, however, an active participant in the intellectual process that led to decisions and he alone was responsible for every decision that lay at the heart of his speeches.⁷³ The Rhetorical Presidency of John F. Kennedy thus must be assessed not by the frequency of his involvement in the SOTU process, but by the quality of his involvement. Despite the impression that JFK was an inactive participant in the SOTU process, assisted by the speechwriter who authored his speeches,

71. Memo, George McGovern to Kenneth O’Donnell, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen Papers. JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 memorandums 12/22/61–1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

72. Draft #4 – foreign affairs portion, January 10, 1962. Theodore C. Sorensen JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 drafts 1/8/62–1/9/62. Box 69. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

73. Sorensen, *Let the Word Go Forth*, 2.

Kennedy was behind every decision that went to his speeches. He chose words with care to carry those decisions and only delegated the time-consuming task of drafting to Sorensen. These findings illustrate that Kennedy did not attempt to offer a hollow sound of leadership through his *SOTUS*. Rather, it be fair to say that while Sorensen crafted the medium, Kennedy shaped the message.

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON: HIS OWN BEST SPEECHWRITER

Following the assassination of President Kennedy, as Walt Rostow remembered, President Johnson was involved in the *SOTU* process from its outset. Rostow would be invited to “a remarkable meeting,” which most likely must have been the Preliminary Meeting of December 23. Rostow’s recollections shed some light on the President’s role in the process and the advice he would give to the speechwriters:

The President invited me over to a meeting to discuss the outlines of his first State of the Union message. . . . He began speaking about what was on his mind, starting with foreign policy and security, and then saying the prime object was to make sure we were strong, but to move for peace. Then he turned to his hopes in the domestic scene. He was expounding his views so that we would have a picture of what he wanted to convey in the State of the Union message. I remember he said, “All of you that have drafted for President Kennedy have got to remember that I speak twice as slowly so that you’ve got to give me shorter drafts for a given amount of time.” And then there was an excellent and, I suspect, important discussion on the domestic scene—what directions President Johnson would like to go, a discussion of the poverty program, and couldn’t we find a better name for it than that; and then a discussion of education. There was quite some time spent on that point . . . my conclusion was that we had a great President. It was a most impressive exposition of what he wanted to do in military policy, in foreign policy, in domestic policy.”⁷⁴

74. Transcript, Walt W. Rostow Oral History Interview I, 3/21/69, by Paige E. Mulholan, Internet Copy, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, retrieved on February 11,

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The method by which the foreign policy drafts were produced varied. President Johnson would “design it as it went, and then lay his stamp on it. Now, he didn’t lay as much of his stamp on it, in my judgment, as he should have, because he was the best draftsman among us. This goes to one of the really great issues about President Johnson. But whenever he did it was always valuable. His feeling for words was extremely sensitive.”⁷⁵

The extent to which LBJ would improve his drafts by making last-minute changes on the already released copies of his SOTUS used to give his drafters “heart seizure.”⁷⁶ The morning after Lyndon Johnson’s first State of the Union Address, a front-page picture of the Washington Post showed the President in the limousine on the way to the Hill. On Johnson’s lap was the draft of the Address—with almost every line crossed out, and LBJ was still rewriting. As one of Johnson’s speechwriters noted, one could not truthfully say, “I write for the President. LBJ was hands-on kind of man.”⁷⁷

LBJ was also preoccupied with the length of his SOTUS. The expected and the actual word counts are indicated on the upper right corner of the SOTU drafts. Johnson wanted the draft of his 1964 Address, for instance, to be no longer than 2,500 words. Johnson’s goal in subsequent years was not to exceed 3,000 words.

Harry McPherson who was the principal drafter of LBJ’s State of the Unions at the end of his presidency, remembered that “every State of the Union speech ... [was] a trauma” for President Johnson:

He gets into an incredible mood, horrible mood, and things start flying out. Other people get brought in, everybody but the cook gets brought in to make it more personal or human or whatever.

2008 from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/ROSTOW/rostow.asp>.

75. *Ibid.*, 8.

76. Memo to the President, January 10, 1966. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union Input requested by the President. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 170. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

77. Newspaper article, Internet copy, “Speechwriter (Gulp) in the White House,” Mary Z. Grey, *washingtonpost.com*, April 2, 2001, page C04. Folder: Speechwriters. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

I gave up in the last two days. I just couldn't bear it any more. I fought some a little the last couple of days, but not much, as things were further added to it. I was trying to make it not very programmatic and mostly philosophical. The country was torn up with turbulence. There was a lot of discontent about Viet Nam. Everything was wrong, you know, and I wanted to write a speech that addressed itself to that and did it in a very tough way; in a way that would be very candid and would not say something like "We're a ship". What was it that he finally said, "When a ship plows through the waters, it makes waves" in effect, you know. "That's what we're doing." It's a lot of crap. I mean it's true, but there's a lot more that's true, too. It was a dangerous metaphor, one that he insisted on, once he heard about it. And the philosophy was like a river and the programs that were sprinkled through it were like logs in the river, and they were being moved by the philosophy down the river; but the river level kept falling. As we would cut the speech to make it shorter and more succinct, the philosophy would get cut inevitably and you're left with logs. Pretty soon you've got a dry river bed and a lot of logs stuck in the mud and not going anywhere. It was a bum speech.⁷⁸

The initial discussion of the SORU usually took place as early as in August, or September. The President himself usually initiated the State of the Union process in mid-fall by sending memoranda to departments and agencies requesting submission of ideas for the State of the Union.⁷⁹

In terms of the President's role in the speechwriting process, the President worked closely with Goodwin and edited the drafts. Despite being a hands-on man, Johnson's involvement in speechwriting was generally limited to striking out selected paragraphs. President Johnson used an *X* to mark excerpts he did not approve. Rarely, if ever, did he make any substantial or instructive remarks on the margins, or come up with an alternative feed. Rather, Johnson

⁷⁸. Transcript, Harry McPherson Oral History Interview III, 1/16/69, by T. H. Baker, Internet Copy, LBJ Library, retrieved on March 1, 2008 from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/search/OralHistory/ohsearch.html>, 8.

⁷⁹. Memo, President to the Heads of Departments and Agencies, October 30, 1967. 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968 Agency Proposals ADCA-GSA. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 7, 1968–January 17, 1968. Box 259. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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would only strike out the sentences he did not like. Occasionally, the President would change the order of the words in a sentence. In addition, he would underline selected words, most likely those he wanted to emphasize during the delivery. Changes made by the President such as deletions, substitutions of one word for another, or additions of new sentences were marked with an asterisk. Typically, the President’s drafts were typed in engrossed font with total word count and the number of words per page. The first pages of the President’s drafts were marked with an over-sized letter *L*, most likely standing for Lyndon.⁸⁰

In spite of being assisted by speechwriters and speech coordinators, Johnson’s principal speechwriter in the last years of his presidency, Harry McPherson, stressed that as far as he might have made a decision as to whether a major speech, like a State of the Union, would emphasize philosophy as opposed to programs, it would be fair to say that “no decision I make sticks unless the President’s willing to go along with it.”⁸¹ Ultimately, the President, not the speechwriter, would make such decisions. Although Johnson did not contribute SOTU drafts himself, he was well acquainted with the progress on the drafts and in control of the process and content of his the SOTUS.

In addition, only President Johnson could provide the speech coordinator with the support he needed to speed up the speechwriting process. As there were some nineteen speeches to be going up to Congress by the end of February 1968, Califano pointed out to the President that “it would be very helpful to me if you could make these points at the meeting,” that “we are on a very tight schedule, we want to get all the messages and the legislation up to Congress by the end of February, everyone must meet his deadline for submission of the message drafts to Joe Califano.”⁸² This meant that a premium must have been put on the quality of the drafts. Cabinet officers

80. Memo, Dick Goodwin to the President, 1/12/66, 1/12/66 Annual Message on the State of the Union, Dick Goodwin drafts. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Joseph Califano to the President, January 16, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968, State of Union Material from Conference Table During Day 1/17/68. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. Box 263. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

were expected to put their best people to work on the messages and personally review and rewrite these drafts—and submit a document that he is proud of—as if it were his own message. The President was actively involved in reviewing the SOTU drafts, he provided McPherson with instructions on what to omit, insert or add. Johnson’s involvement would not be limited to giving instructions. He would also delete some paragraphs and suggest new inserts as was evident in the process of drafting the 1968 SOTU.⁸³ On the days when President Johnson was scheduled to deliver his State of the Unions, he often held meetings with bipartisan congressional leadership, held a weekly luncheon with his secretaries, and rehearsed the speech in the Theater Room of the Mansion several times prior to the delivery.⁸⁴

Assessment

LBJ was a hands-on President in control of speechwriting and policy making process. He provided leadership early on by initiating the annual programming process and requesting input from government agencies and departments for his SOTU. Johnson was equally concerned with the content of his Addresses, editorial issues, language and word count. The negative aspect of Johnson’s involvement was that perhaps it was too active. By the end of his presidency, every SOTU would become a traumatic experience for Johnson. On top of making final decisions with regard to what would be included in the speech, which normally every President does, Johnson tried too hard to be his own best speechwriter and speech coordinator. Johnson perhaps did not fully trust McPherson to do his job. He supervised him constantly by bringing too many people into the process and thus frustrating the smooth progression of drafts.

83. Draft, SOTU Draft #4, Harry McPherson to Jim Jones, January 13, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Draft no. 4/ McPherson. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 17, 1968. Box 261. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

84. The President’s Daily Diary, 12/1/68–1/20/69. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963-1969. Box 18. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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GERALD R. FORD: NO EXECUTIVE MINDSET

In the opinion of Bob Hartmann, Ford’s approach to a speech was that of “a legislator; it required something on paper to spark its further development.”⁸⁵ For instance, already the Draft Outline of the President’s 1977 SOTU included minor remarks in the President’s handwriting.⁸⁶ As subsequent drafts ensued, the President substituted words, advised to change the language of a passage, and struck out a few lines, which sounded spoken.⁸⁷ Hartmann along with the President went through more than ten drafts of the 1976 from start to finish before the final SOTU draft was produced.⁸⁸ The extant drafts including the President’s handwriting and his initials *GRF* provide evidence that Ford edited his SOTU drafts.⁸⁹ In his memoir narrative of the Ford presidency, Bob Hartmann pointed out that the President was “unconsciously intolerant of the communication process.”⁹⁰ Ford would rarely “put his thoughts on paper in more than note or outline form,” and “faced up to the fact that making a major address is *one of the most important things a President does.*”⁹¹

An undated handwritten note to Hartmann provides evidence that the President considered the State of the Union “the most important project in 1976.”⁹² The SOTU was “the keynote” of the Ford campaign for the Republican presidential nomination.⁹³ The Economic Policy Board saw the SOTU as a

85. Robert T. Hartmann, *Palace Politics: An Inside Account of the Ford Years*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), 384.

86. Draft Outline of State of the Union Message, November 24, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1977 Draft Outline 11/24/76 (1) Cannon Papers, Box 15. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

87. President’s copy of the Sixth Draft of the State of the Union 1976, 1/17/76. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Sixth Draft 1/19/76, Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

88. Hartmann, Interview, 6–7.

89. Draft, President’s copy of the Sixth Draft of the State of the Union 1976, 1/17/76. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Sixth Draft 1/19/76, Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

90. Robert T. Hartmann, *Palace Politics: An Inside Account of the Ford Years*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1980), 382.

91. *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

92. Memo, Robert T. Hartmann to the President, January 6, 1976. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Memo to the President. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

93. Wire stories, AP, Walter R. Mears. Folder: SOTU, 1976 Wire stories, Ron Nessen Papers,

unique opportunity for the President “to outline his vision for America during the coming five years and for the remainder of the twentieth century.”⁹⁴ The President would initiate his search for themes in connection with the 1976 SOTU as early as February 3, 1975 by conducting a series of conferences, or town hall meetings, with mayors and governors around the country.⁹⁵ Contrary to John R. Green’s claim, Ford did not ignore the Domestic Council throughout his presidency.⁹⁶ In fact, Ford authorized his Domestic Council staff, under Vice President Rockefeller as its Vice-Chairman and James Cannon as its Executive Director, to formulate a “comprehensive, cohesive Ford Administration program for 1976.”⁹⁷ In the course of several months, the White House compiled and summarized for the President proposals from most of the major departments and agencies of the executive branch. The President instructed Vice President Rockefeller and the Domestic Council to “review current domestic programs and develop new concepts, policies and recommendations for ... January 1976 State of the Union Message,” which included “a discussion of social issues, those dealing with our resource capacity, those that pertain to our economic growth, and other related issues such as housing, transportation, and intergovernmental relations.”⁹⁸ The President expected that “this process should be completed by mid-September so that we can make decisions on future initiatives by the end of the year.”⁹⁹

A Gallup poll at the time when the Address was drafted showed that Ford’s job performance rating declined to 39 percent. The Address had to incorporate the “conservative demands within the Republican party for a sharp restraint

box 27. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

94. Memo, “Overall Theme for the State of the Union,” Undated. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Economy, Hartmann, box 81. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

95. Pat McKee to Jim Cannon, “SOTU Chronology,” January 19, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1976, Chronology of Preparations (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 13.

96. Greene, *Presidency of Gerald Ford*, 29.

97. *Ibid.*

98. Memo, Vice President to the President, “Domestic Policy Recommendations for the State of the Union,” December 10, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976—Report of Vice President to President, 12/10/75, Cannon Papers, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

99. “Domestic Policy Discussion Memorandum #1: Overview—August, 1975.” Folder: SOTU, 1976 Drafts, 8/75 James Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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in government spending while offering enough new directions to appeal to a broader segment of the public.”¹⁰⁰ Starting mid-October 1975, the President was scheduled to spend 60 to 120 minutes a week on the development of the State of the Union. The most intensive work on the SOTU would not start until the first week of November. The President would spend up to two weekly sessions, each lasting 120 minutes, on the SOTU. At the same time there were other issues that the President would be involved in, including the Budget Message, foreign and domestic trips, and economic and energy meetings.¹⁰¹ Most of the President’s time, however, would be allocated to the State of the Union Address: 1,320 minutes in total.¹⁰²

Ford seems to have been not only intensively involved in the process of development of the SOTU, but also quite accessible. Presidential meetings with governors of strategically important regions were also a way to help garner their support for the President’s legislative proposals, for instance, in an area such as energy.¹⁰³ The correspondence between the President and

100. Stephen E. Nordlinger, “Ford aims at housing, job needs,” *The Baltimore Sun*, January 10, 1976. Folder: SOTU, 1976 General. Ron Nessen Papers, Box 27. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. Ford’s low approval rating may be attributed to the major reorganization of his Cabinet on November 4, 1975, also known as the Halloween Massacre.

101. Memorandum, William Nicholson to James Cannon, James Lynn, William Seidman, “Tentative Time allocation for the President’s State of the Union and Budget Preparation.” October 14, 1975. Folder: Development of the State of the Union Message (1). A. Quern Files, Box 17. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

102. Memorandum, William Nicholson to James Cannon, James Lynn, William Seidman, “Tentative Time allocation for the President’s State of the Union and Budget Preparation.” October 14, 1975. Folder: Development of the State of the Union Message (1). A. Quern Files, Box 17. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. In Ron Nessen’s view, it would be fair to divide the President’s input into two stages; “the last week or ten days he has been involved in writing the actual speech. It would be fair to say he spent at least 50 hours in the last week or ten days writing the speech, but the preparation of it in the sense of coming to grips with the issues has gone back a number of months,” including “dozens of meetings on the issues of the State of the Union.” For more information, see Press Conference of James T. Lynn, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, L. William Seidman, Assistant to the President for Economic Affairs, and James M. Cannon, Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs. Folder: Presidential Speeches—State of the Union, 1976—Follow-up. J. Goldwin, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

103. Memo, Jim Falk to the President, “Working Dinner with Southeast Governors,” February 3, 1975. Folder: SOTU, 1976, Chronology of Preparations (1), James Cannon Papers, Box 13. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Bob Hartmann indicates that the 1976 SOTU was of “maximum importance, probably critical” to the President.¹⁰⁴ As 1976 was an election year, Ford’s State of the Union would be expected to preview the major campaign themes of the Republican Party. The President wanted it to be “best in text & delivery.” President Ford’s handwritten note to Hartmann reveals that the President had listened to many people in the West Wing and outside and they arrived at a consensus that the SOTU “must be Presidential; that it should “convey certain detachment from the Congress” which would eliminate the “buddy allegation.” The Address should make a point about the Bicentennial, have “a high moral beginning and ending,” and include a theme of being the President “for the ordinary, hard-working guy.” It should project an image of “an embattled President fighting against the “evil forces in Watergate,” and incorporate “the best line” that the President used at President Ford Committee—“Proud of America & Proud to be an American.”¹⁰⁵ This last line survived to the final draft.

Since the President considered the State of the Union in 1976 so important, he wanted Hartmann “to concentrate 100 percent on that and I can call on any resources immediately.”¹⁰⁶ Ford believed that the speech would give him “an opportunity to point out the direction in which I wanted to steer the government, not just in 1976 but for the next four years.”¹⁰⁷

The first, sixty-page draft was, in the President’s judgment, much too long and its thrust was “confused.”¹⁰⁸ After the President made some “additions and deletions” he asked Hartmann to try again. There was a note on the draft in Ford’s handwriting that related to the President’s proposal to consolidate Federal education grant programs. The President pointed out that it must have been made clear “that these are federal funds going to states & local communities to help them solve their problems. If we don’t the Reagan forces

104. President’s Comments. Folder: 1/19/76 President’s Comments and Notes. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

105. Memo, Robert T. Hartmann to the President, January 6, 1976. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Memo to the President. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

106. *Ibid.*

107. Ford, *A Time to Heal*, 349.

108. *Ibid.*, 350.

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will say I am ‘me tooing’ his proposal.”¹⁰⁹ Ford wanted the speech to be more “dignified” and to reflect the Bicentennial. Specifically, Ford wanted Hartmann to “contrast 10 years of bad experience with 200 years of good,” the latter being “more indicative of our moral strength & this is important. It is the measuring rod of American greatness.”¹¹⁰

Before he and a few members of his senior staff went to Vail, CO for Christmas, Cannon called in a pre-Christmas conference to discuss “the tone and thrust” and less the content of the SOTU with ranking White House assistants. As far as in the preliminaries to the 1975 Address, “the serious argument was over policy. This time, it was over style.”¹¹¹ A story goes that soon after returning from China in early December 1975, President Ford drafted the main thrust and structure of the speech.¹¹² According to another story, already around October, the President started to provide Robert Hartmann with ideas and notes for the State of the Union. The President himself did not really focus on the speech until early January. As soon as he returned from Vail Ford instructed Hartmann to get started on the SOTU, and drop everything else. He recommended that Hartmann takes a small group of assistants out of Washington to “thrash out ideas that might go into the address.”¹¹³

At the end of the 1976 SOTU process, President Ford invited the Cabinet members to the Cabinet Room to discuss an advance copy of the Address, as it was the opportunity to hear personally from the President what he planned to emphasize in his SOTU.¹¹⁴ The President sat down with his senior staff and

109. First Draft of the State of the Union, 1/12/76. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU First Draft 1/12/76 President’s Comments. Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

110. Memo, Robert T. Hartmann to the President, January 6, 1976. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Memo to the President. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

111. Article, “Ford’s Balancing Act,” *The New Republic*, 9. Folder: Presidential Speeches—State of the Union, 1976—Follow-up. J. Goldwin, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*, 10.

114. Talking Points, 1/19/76, Box 5, James E. Connor Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, retrieved on April 1, 2008 from <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/cabinet/760119.htm>.

continued to argue over the details of the speech. As one participant recalled, “it was like group journalism. We argued over semicolons and comas.”¹¹⁵ According to Orben’s report, it was a “savage, three-hour attack upon the draft before the group. Only Hartmann, the President and possibly Cheney knew that the President himself had drafted the version that some of the others proceeded to cut up.”¹¹⁶ At one point, the President got so angry that for the first time the President was seen “pounding the table.”¹¹⁷ Ford lost his temper, twice slamming the table with his hand and telling the staff to stop arguing and come up with a final draft in 24 hours. “One slam was a 9 on the Richter scale and the other a 7.”¹¹⁸

A major weakness of Ford’s managerial style was that he could not control his top aides.¹¹⁹ With no concept of subordination in the chain of command, they were unable to amalgamate rival drafts into one speech. Eventually, the day he delivered his first State of the Union, the President stayed up until 3 or 4 A.M., working on the text. Ford would later remember, “It was a long, disagreeable night and a waste of time, but it did teach me a lesson. In the future, I told Hartmann, important speeches had to be submitted to me well in advance of the scheduled delivery date. I simply couldn’t tolerate any more performances like that.”¹²⁰ The vertical lines on the sides of the draft were most likely made by the President.¹²¹ The President would make a single line along the text that he liked and two lines to indicate the text that he liked very much.¹²²

115. Philip Shabecoff, “Mr. Ford in search of the Speech.” Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Reaction to the Speech. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

116. “Ford’s Balancing Act,” *The New Republic*, January 31, 1976. Folder: Presidential Speeches—State of the Union, 1976—Follow-up. J. Goldwin, Box 14. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

117. Casserly, *The Ford White House*, 287.

118. *Ibid.*

119. For more information on Ford’s staff management problems see Greene, *Presidency of Gerald Ford*, 24.

120. Ford, *Time to Heal*, 233.

121. Eighth Draft of the State of the Union 1976, 1/18/76. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Eight Draft 1/18/76, Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

122. Eighth Draft of the State of the Union 1976, 1/18/76. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Eight Draft

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Assessment

Gerald Ford’s involvement in the process of composing his State of the Unions was quite intense given the number of activities he got himself involved into, including traveling around the country to solicit ideas for his SOTU, holding SOTU meetings with his staff and policy experts, contributing ideas and actually finishing drafting his SOTU. At the same time, however, the President was not fully in control of the process; unaware of what changes were made on the drafts, by whom and how competitive and incompetent some of his closest advisers were. The problems with Ford’s speechwriting establishment cannot be blamed on the President alone. Gerald Ford worked hard to get his part of the job done. Ford’s managerial skills of providing the overall direction for the speechwriting organization, however, leave much to be desired. President Ford, as also John R. Greene noted, lacked “an executive mindset—that little bit of the corporate CEO that is so necessary to the smooth running of a large staff.”¹²³ Given the amount of workload that goes into the preparation of the SOTU, the President must get most of the work done through others. He has his advisers and chief speechwriter to assist him in carrying out the duties of the presidency, including crafting speeches. The sharing of responsibilities during the SOTU process can be effective, if the chief speechwriter has the President’s backing and trust, and enjoys respect among the White House staff. Bob Hartmann did not have enough of either backing or authority. Thus, the Ford-Hartmann duo was not as effective as in the case of Kennedy and Sorensen. The core of being the chief executive is decision-making. The President cannot do everything, but ultimately, he is responsible for everything. Ford lacked broad focus and did not control the overall performance of his staff. In the end, he had to rely on

1/18/76, Hartmann Papers, Box 180. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library. Gerald R. Ford’s writing traits are distinguishable by normally straight baseline and a slight right slant. In longer sentences, the size of the letters would slightly diminish, as the baseline would slightly ascend. Characteristically, Ford’s letter size would be small to medium with small middle zone, tall upper-zone extensions and long lower loops. The space between letters would be compressed but the formation of letters was relatively clear and the writing legible. The President wrote most of his remarks in black ink pen.

123. Greene, *Presidency of Gerald Ford*, 22.

his own speechwriting abilities because it is specifically the President whom the Constitution charges with providing information on the condition of the nation.

GEORGE H. W. BUSH: THE UNRHETORICAL PRESIDENT?

President Bush felt less comfortable with public appeals than Ronald Reagan did. Bush “felt he couldn’t match Reagan, and therefore he didn’t try. What he wanted was good meat and potatoes rhetoric rather than the flowery, but he was very particular about what he said.”¹²⁴ The head of the speechwriting division, Tony Snow, described Bush’s relationship with the writers as “distant.”¹²⁵ Overall, the White House attached little importance to speechwriting and the President did not consider it very important. President Bush did not use speeches as “substantive occasions to communicate a worldview or policy priorities.” He “thought of speeches as superficial P. R. events” and did not see the need to use them as Reagan had. Tony Snow attributed the Bush White House a failure to learn from the Reagan example to arrogance driven by the belief that Bush was smarter than his predecessor was and did not need superficial public relations to succeed.¹²⁶ On page 17 of the final draft, there is a note—“Bush’s,” which likely indicates that the President had been involved in editing the near final draft of his 1989 SOTU-like speech, however.¹²⁷

A close look at SOTU drafts may lead to the conclusion that President Bush’s personal involvement in the actual drafting process was generally non-existent. President Bush’s Chief of Staff John H. Sununu was of a different opinion. In his experience, Bush would actually sit down himself to do editing,

124. Miller Center. “Interview with John H. Sununu (06/2000).”

125. After Tony Snow in Mark J. Rozzell, “In Reagan’s shadow: Bush’s antirhetorical presidency,” *The Free Library* (January 1), retrieved on October 12, 2008 from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/InReagan'sshadow:Bush'santirhetoricalpresidency.-a020791089>.

126. Ibid.

127. Final Changes, “Message of President George Bush to a Joint Session of Congress, February 9, 1989.” Draft February 9, 1989, 6 AM. Bush Presidential Records Office of Speechwriting, Speech File – Drafts. Folder: Joint Session of Congress 2/9/89 [OA 2771] [3], Box 2. George Bush Presidential Library.

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... and there would be lots of marked up things on the draft, but he’s talking to him [the speechwriter] about what he meant when he marked this up and what he meant when he marked that up. The speechwriter is frantically writing ... So you finish that and the speechwriter goes back and now comes back and probably for the first time you have a speech draft ... that has any semblance to what the President has in mind himself for a State of the Union Address. The President gets a copy of that and now he’s really doing a serious edit, marking things down, worrying about phrases, and now everybody is competing for words.¹²⁸

In addition, there is some evidence that the President was involved in shaping the content of his first State of the Union Address in 1990. In his memorandum to David Demarest in mid-December 1989, President Bush noted that he wanted that some thought be given to speech on “changes in the world ... foster change not recklessly ‘cut’ ... our ‘goal for the ’90s.’ ”¹²⁹ The President wanted to talk about his idea with Demarest before Christmas. Bush’s preferred structure of his SotUS throughout his presidency was a thematic, rather than a programmatic address. The concept of a thematic speech appealed to the President already in 1990 and he wanted to see, if he could also give a shorter speech, less than 30 minutes, or even shorter. At Charles Kolb’s suggestion, it was agreed that President Bush’s speech would be “shorter and more thematic in nature than many in the past.”¹³⁰ President Bush explained his thematic approach in the following way:

My speech tonight doesn’t detail every line item in our new budget; rather it sets out my view of the State of the Union and our world. What a year it has been. Because of the dramatic events of 1989, my speech reviews ... the past year—from Panama to Poland to the Berlin Wall—and looks forward to the challenges we face... I

128. Miller Center. “Interview with John H. Sununu (06/2000).”

129. Memo, President to David Demarest, “State of Union,” December 15, 1989, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

130. Memo, David Q. Bates Jr. to Catalina V. Villalpando, January 25, 1990. WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union 1990 [6] Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

decided that rather than recite the laundry list of accomplishment and programs, I would like to talk thematically about our challenges ... opportunity, competitiveness, stewardship and investment. I have included a section on our domestic initiatives, and our foreign policy goals for the coming year. ... I wanted this to be a shorter speech, more thematic than usual, and I think we've succeeded.¹³¹

President Bush departed from the tradition to spell out his legislative program and spent a lot of time within the speech talking about the basic set of principles that have guided him last year and pronounced the goals for 1990. The outline of the State of the Union Address of January 29, 1990 clearly indicates that Bush's 1990 SOTU was to be an Address on the state of the Union, not the state of the government.¹³² President Bush reasoned that the departure was "warranted by the extraordinary times we live in. And as stated, my intent tonight is to speak not about these programs—to issue a State of the Government address—but to speak to you about the State of the Union—about the larger forces at work in the world and here at home, that are destined to have a direct effect on the lives of all Americans for years to come."¹³³

The Address of 1990 differed slightly from the established tradition in that the Budget Message was presented prior to the SOTU. This allowed the President to do an Address that was not just a recitation of all the details of what's in the budget, and not the traditional shopping list of the Administration's programs either.¹³⁴ Bush's State of the Union was to be a discussion of the assumptions and premises that went into the development of the bud-

131. President's Talking Points, undated. Bush Presidential Records, Office of Speechwriting. Folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

132. Outline, State of the Union, January 29, 1990. Bush Presidential Records, Office of Speechwriting. Folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

133. "Additional pages of the Draft #3," WHORM: Subject File-Gen, Bush Presidential Records,. Folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS, box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

134. Minutes, Briefing by Senior Administration Officials, January 31, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [8] Case No. 128526SS, box 89. George Bush Presidential Library.

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gets. It was an opportunity for the President to give the American public “some background on the kinds of thinking that he has given to the issues that are important in America.” Some specific pieces of legislation were to be presented in the SOTU but “in the context of where they are related to the fundamentals that are there—more as examples of what flow from the process of development rather than saying “and I am going to do this,” and “here are the 17 points associated with that program.”¹³⁵

Again, in 1991, Bush’s SOTU was thematic.¹³⁶ The President’s decision to produce a thematic message in 1991 was likely influenced by Charles Kolb. The 1991 State of the Union Address would be the last opportunity for the Administration “to lay out a thematic domestic policy agenda before the 1992 election cycle begins.”¹³⁷ Having assumed that the Address was to be something more than just a budget summary, Kolb urged determining the Administration’s basic message. Also, President Bush’s understanding of his 1992 State of the Union, which he laid out in the Cabinet meeting on January 28 prior to the delivery of the Address, was that the SOTU was “not a programmatic speech.” The President’s intention was not to “reference all the programs of government,” but rather, “to hit the issues which are on the minds of the American people: jobs and the economy.” The chief purpose of the Address was to announce to the American people the Administration’s “specific proposals for jobs and economic growth,” leaving it up to Congress to pass them. Bush was aware, however, that the Administration would have to help Congress to pass its plan, “We have got to get out there and resonate the message that it is important for Congress to pass our plan.”¹³⁸ The President

135. Briefing by Senior Administration Officials, January 31, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [8] Case No. 128526SS, box 89. George Bush Presidential Library.

136. Memo, Jennifer Grossman to Mark Lange, “Today’s meeting with Porter, Damarest,” January 9, 1991, folder: State of the Union 1991, 1/29/91, Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 81. George Bush Presidential Library.

137. Memo, Charles E. M. Kolb to Roger B. Porter, “State of the Union Themes,” December 4, 1990, Open P2/P5 Documents, Documents 2201–2250, Case Number 198181, WHORM: Subject File-General, Bush Presidential Records. George Bush Presidential Library.

138. Cabinet Meeting, January 28, 1992, folder: 1/28/92, Presidential Daily Backup, Bush Presidential Records, box 91. George Bush Presidential Library.

would be familiar already with the first draft.¹³⁹ He was informed on the progress and drafts were sent to him.¹⁴⁰ President's comments in his own handwriting, though rare, could be identified on the drafts, including his remark, "[p]lease don't ask me to tell the American people that spending 1.23 trillion is not enough government spending."¹⁴¹

The draft of the President's Talking Points, illustrates that the President was in control of the speech drafting process. He made decisions affecting the content of the speech, showed initiative and would not let the departments decide about the direction of the speech. The draft also indicates that the departments would send their programs, but the President decided that he did not want the usual recital of proposals, but rather, he wanted to talk thematically.¹⁴² In a personal letter to his friend, dated January 27, 1992 the President admitted: "I am working hard on the State of the Union and will do my very best. A lot of people are hurting, and I want to give them hope and leadership."¹⁴³ Bush wanted to know the length of his 1991 speech draft on the teleprompter.¹⁴⁴ The President would also be involved in the post-Sotu communication strategy and sign some of the letters from his supporters.¹⁴⁵

139. State of the Union Draft Schedule, undated, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6] Case No. 128526SS, WHORM: Subject File-Gen, Bush Presidential Records, box 33. George Bush Presidential Library.

140. White House Staffing Memorandum, "State of the Union – 1/29/90 Draft," WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990 [6], Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

141. Notes, "Handwritten notes by POTUS, RE: State of the Union Address draft," WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Bush Presidential Records, Open P2/P5 Documents, Case Number 128526SS [3]. George Bush Presidential Library.

142. President's Talking Points, undated, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

143. Letter, the President to Doug E. Coe, January 27, 1992, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992, Case No. 306508 to case number 307434SS, box 38. George Bush Presidential Library.

144. Note, Phillip D. Brady to the President, January 27, 1992, folder: SP 230-92, State of the Union 1992. Case No. 301892SS [5], WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, box 39. George Bush Presidential Library.

145. Letter, President to Dr. and Mrs. Jim Cheek, February 14, 1990, WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90, State of the Union 1990. Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

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Assessment

Bush’s involvement and his approach to writing speeches can be examined by the type of the SOTU his own and his staff’s efforts produced. Throughout his term in office, Bush produced thematic, inspirational and thus largely ceremonial State of the Unions. Bush’s ceremonial SOTU may be a consequence of including speechwriters with little policy knowledge in the drafting process and a reflection of Bush’s approach that US policies should be formulated along the lines of broader philosophical principles and values. Inspirational speeches can be effective acts of national unification. The domestic and internal strength of the United States affected its strength on the international arena, where particularly in the ’90s, the US needed to retain the position of the global leader. Congress, however, needs more than an annual review of American values and principles. Ceremonial rhetoric alone is not an indicator of a President’s capacity to govern. Deliberative language of policymaking is expected in the SOTU.

By the power of the “recommending measures” clause that mandates the SOTU, the President is now expected to assert himself in the beginning of the legislative process by persuading Congress to act on his agenda. George H. W. Bush’s agenda, however, was shaped by a series of historical events and crises in the international arena, including the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the US as the world’s dominant power, Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and the subsequent US involvement in the Gulf War, and invasion in Panama. These historical circumstances provided President Bush with an agenda in the foreign policy area, over which Presidents usually have more latitude than they do with domestic policy area, and the area in which Bush already had previous experience as US Ambassador to the UN, US envoy to China, CIA director and Vice President. His record on domestic legislation, however, remained poor.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the preparation and presentation of a detailed and comprehensive legislative program to Congress became the major expectation and thus the major effort of the presidency. By analyzing the nature of presidential involvement in the SOTU process, including both the intellectual process of developing ideas, decision-making, as well as the actual drafting, we get a better understanding of how the Presidents use of the annual occasion to affect policies. Such an analysis also gives us an insight into the rhetorical dimension of each presidency.

As the present and the preceding chapters illustrate, to carry out other duties of the presidency, each chief executive under study had to rely on policy experts and speechwriters for generating ideas, providing submissions and the actual drafting. No matter how many people have a hand and a say in the President's speech, the President is inescapably involved in the SOTU preparatory process. As President Ford's case vividly illustrates, the President's fate and his success are determined not only by the quality of his staff but also his own efforts.

Although the intensity of presidential involvement in the SOTU preparatory process differed, each of the five men examined in the present work was involved in the deliberative process of reaching a decision about what would be included in his SOTU. Kennedy and Bush were least involved in drafting, their handwriting is scarce or non-existent on the drafts of their SOTUS. Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson and Ford would be almost equally concerned with decision-making, drafting and editing their SOTU drafts.

The nature of presidential involvement changes as time goes by. Two term Presidents tend to be more active in both the SOTU process during the first term in office. President Eisenhower, for instance, would be involved in a range of activities: from initiating the spadework, providing a conceptual framework, suggesting specific ideas for the Address, deciding the center of emphasis of the message, engaging in the deliberative process with the Cabinet and senior advisors, through the agonizing procedure of drafting, editing, rehearsing and eventually delivering the Address. Eisenhower was very dedicated to

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producing his comprehensive SOTUS because he knew that Congress expected them, and overworked his drafts. Even following the stroke that the President experienced in late 1955, he would work on his 1956 Address from a hospital bed. Like President Johnson, Eisenhower would still make changes on the draft of his SOTU on the way to the Capitol. For President Johnson, the SOTU process was extremely stressful, if not traumatic. He was never satisfied with his speeches and overworked his drafts. LBJ’s imprint on the SOTU operation was that of personal activism.

Like Eisenhower and Johnson, Gerald Ford was a hands-on man, very involved in the process of producing his annual Addresses, which he considered important. Under President Ford, the SOTU process began as early as some ten, eleven months before the scheduled Address. Ford gathered first-hand information by traveling around the country and holding conferences, meetings with the intellectuals, closest policy advisers, and congressional leadership. The fact that Ford could not control his staff was the sign of his feeble management. When Ford’s speechwriting establishment failed him, the President had to finish drafting his SOTU on his own.

Eisenhower and Kennedy were concerned with words, but unlike Kennedy, Eisenhower was a tough editor of his speeches. Both, however, used language instrumentally as means of securing results, and not as ends in themselves. JFK was skeptical of the value of speeches and their practical impact on governing the country. President Bush also considered speeches as superficial PR events and attached very little importance to speechwriting. Bush like Ford was a “meat and potato rhetoric” kind of person. Flowery rhetoric did not appeal to these two men. If the job of the Rhetorical President is to use public speaking as an instrument of power, then Bush was reluctant to use this instrument to assert himself in the policymaking process, particularly in domestic affairs. His State of the Unions were predominantly meant to inspire the American people, rather than provide Congress with blueprint for legislative action. President Bush’s drafters consistently produced thematic rather than programmatic SOTUS and this general direction was decided by the President. In addition, Bush did not use all the opportunities to speak to

the American public through the State of the Union Address and refused to deliver his first and his final pro-forma SOTU.

Importantly, despite the constraints and difficulties as well as staff organizational problems and different intensity of involvement in the SOTU each chief executive analyzed in the present work stood to the discipline of producing his annual report on the condition of the nation regardless of the circumstances.

CHAPTER FOUR

VISUAL LEADERSHIP: BEYOND WORDS, BEYOND GOING PUBLIC

“There’s no doubt about it, the State of the Union Message, for better or for worse, is always one of the great shows of the year.”

Lady Bird Johnson¹

“At Cabinet Meeting today [April 8, 1913] the President came in dressed up for the first time in his Prince Albert, looking spick and span—dressed up properly to break the precedent by reading his message to Congress. Some of us suggested that he had not deemed the members of his Cabinet important enough for him to dress up for them, but seemed to think he thought more of Congress than he did members of the Cabinet. He said he thought he ought to be allowed to dress up occasionally, and that this was the first time he had done so.”

Josephus Daniels²

One of the factors that accounts for the rise and development of the Rhe-

1. Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) 350.

2. Josephus Daniels, *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913–1921*, ed. Edmund David Cronon (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).

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torical Presidency, as noted earlier, is the modern mass media. It has not only increased the size of the President's audience, but also changed the mode of communicating with the public by "replacing the written with the spoken word delivered in a dramatic visible performance."³ With Wilson's resumption of a personally delivered State of the Union Address, a shift from the tradition of silence to the experiment of personal communication took place. A further shift—*beyond words* and *beyond going public*—and towards *going visual* or *visual leadership* became particularly apparent during the Johnson presidency, when a great care was taken not only to prepare the State of the Union Address, but also to prepare the President for the smooth and appealing presentation of the speech.

Visual leadership can thus be defined as a variation on or a group of activities of *going public* in which the President engages already prior to his public appearance and which aim to leave a lasting impression on the public by keeping it absorbed with *what the President looked like, what kind of clothes he was wearing, how he delivered his speech*. Importantly, however, in the case of the important policy speech such as the SOTU, *visual leadership* is complementary leadership and as such, it is meant to leave a complementary impression on the public about *how* the President said something in addition to *what* he said.⁴ It cannot be ruled out, however, that some Presidents will attempt to govern by *visual leadership* alone.

President Johnson's staff in particular have come to understand, what Marshall McLuhan captured in his famous formula *the medium is the message*, that we tend to pay attention to content and ignore the medium.⁵ For McLuhan, "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs."⁶ The medium through which the SOTU is presented contains its own message independent of the content of the SOTU Address, and that it is "visible performance, not

3. Ceaser et al., "The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency," 164.

4. This observation is based only on the cases examined in the present work.

5. "The Medium is the Message" is the title of the first chapter of McLuhan's influential work, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 15.

6. *Ibid.*

the tangible text, that creates the public impression ... what is not seen or heard today does not exist.”⁷ In consequence of that shift, words—however eloquent—would provide the skeleton to the speech. The President’s personal delivery, broadcast on national television, would flesh it out in a way that would be absorbing.

Two meanings of Marshall McLuhan’s formula of *the medium is the message* deserve attention in the context of the SOTU. The first of them is the medium of television itself. Television is the medium Presidents routinely use to present their SOTUS and the President’s presentation must be adjusted to the visual imperative of this medium. The second is the President—the content of the television broadcast. As “the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium,”⁸ the President, that is, his image, sound and gestures, is not only the content of the television broadcast, but also the medium by which his own message is conveyed.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MEDIUM AND THE STATE OF THE UNION AUDIENCE

The audience of the SOTU had been significantly different in the nineteenth century than that of the twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt’s SOTU was the first to go to print in full. Until then people could only read the excerpts of the President’s message in newspapers. The early Annual Messages addressed to Congress tended to be long and detailed. Listening to clerks must have been a tedious experience, as less and less Congressmen showed up for the reading of the annual report. Wilson’s resumption of the oral Address increased congressional audience and necessitated an important organizational change in the House of Representatives. Josephus Daniels’ diary entry of April 8, 1913, records that Wilson’s personal Address:

was not only heard by members of Congress, but the diplomatic

7. Ceaser et al., “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency,” 164.

8. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Sphere Books Limited, 1964), 332.

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gallery was crowded and an audience representative of men political and governmental with such dignity as had never assembled in the House of Representatives. It was the first time the House had used the new method of seating the members. Up to this session each member had had a desk on which he could write his letters and in which he could keep his mail while Congress was in session. In order to accommodate the increased membership of the House, the desks had to be removed and the members are now seated on benches as in the English Parliament.

When it was announced that President Wilson would personally deliver his Tariff Speech to the Congress, *The New York Times* reported that the news:

drew a big crowd to the Capitol building. The galleries of spectators were jammed and the corridors outside of them were filled with people who vainly sought to obtain admission. ... The demand for seats in the House gallery was so great that the officers of the two chambers of Congress decided to exclude from the Capitol building all visitors who did not have special cards of admission. These cards were blue, and the rule against those who did not have them was rigidly reinforced. As a result there was a clamoring crowd of fashionably dressed women and frock-coated men at the main entrance to the House wing of the Capitol. Nearly all of these claimed admission by right of relationship or intimate friendship with some distinguished person, or insisted that the cards entitling them to admission to the galleries on ordinary days were perfectly good for to-day.⁹

The people's enthusiasm for participation would not be fully satisfied. The crowds would have to be pleased with the President's smile and a wave of his hand. Over time, however, the President would attempt to address the people over the heads of Congress to inform them of the plans for the year. The earlier purpose of the SOTU—the report to Congress—had been played down. The audience has shifted from inside the Beltway to the American voters.

9. "Congress Cheers Greet Wilson. House Floor and Galleries are Packed to Hear President's Oral Message," *The New York Times* (April 9, 1913), 1. Roosevelt Study Center.

The advancements of communication would help the SOTU become the Address to the nation and the world. When the news was made public that President Coolidge's SOTU would be broadcast on radio on December 6, 1923, Haynes-Griffin Radio Service, Inc. tried to convince the readers of *The New York Times* "to secure a Radio on seven days' free trial" because to listen to the President's Address was a question of one's "duty to your children to have them among the 'listeners in' on the historical occasion of the first broadcasting of a Presidential message to Congress." Only if you had owned a radio, could you "hear the voice of your President and through his voice get a personal estimate of the man himself."¹⁰ In 1947, the SOTU was brought closer to the people through the first TV broadcast. When in 1965 President Johnson shifted the time of the Address from the traditional midday to evening to attract wider audience, an estimated 30 million people watched the Address on national television.¹¹ The President's decision to present the message during the evening hours "in order that the vast majority of his fellow citizens might see him 'live' on television was a commendable move."¹² In 1982, in the spirit of the modern, public presidency, President Reagan introduced a new practice of inviting and pointing to the guests in the House gallery during the speech and thus further increasing interaction with his audience.¹³ As spectacular examples of self-reliance, the White House guests would help prove the President's policy or detract attention from the expectations placed on the Administration. While President Reagan would

10. "Hear the Voice of President Coolidge," *The New York Times*, Tuesday, December 4, 1923: 22. Freie Universität Berlin; John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies.

11. Newspaper clipping "Johnson's State of Union Speech Sets Course to the Great Society," *The Democrat*, no. 1, Washington, DC: January 8, 1965. Folder: 1/4/65 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union (folder II). Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, December 18, 1964–January 4, 1965, Box 135. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

12. President Johnson's State of the Union Message, Morning newspaper Comment. January 6, 1965. S-P 2-4/ 1965. State of the Union, 1/4/65. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

13. The so-called "Skutnik moment"—The term *Lenny Skutniks* comes from a government office worker Lenny Skutnik who dived into the icy Potomac River and dragged a flight attendant of the 1982 plane crash to safety. The same year, President Reagan pointed to him in his State of the Union Address as an example of "the spirit of American heroism at its finest."

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point to selected individuals present in the House gallery, President George H. W. Bush would quote excerpts of letters sent to him by American citizens.¹⁴ The evolution of the SOTU audience was thus conditioned by advancements of communication which invited different degree of participation on the part of the users. The radio, was not as engaging as television. As Marshall McLuhan pointed out, “TV will not work as background. It engages you. You have to be with it.”¹⁵

The importance of appealing to audience was unquestionable already in mid-’50s. President Eisenhower’s advisers were aware that the State of the Union Address gives the President “a rare opportunity to communicate his program through radio and television directly to a mass audience of the American people, many of whom will form permanent judgments of the value of his program just from listening to his speech.”¹⁶ And thus the speech, as Secretary Mitchell suggested, should be constructed so that it would “sustain maximum listener interest for as long as possible at the beginning of the speech, information on programs and policies in which the average American is interested and which he can understand.”¹⁷ Many listeners would not be interested in the discussion of topics such as federal deficit, balancing the budget, raising the debt limit, development of energy and resource, and transportation policy because they would see little relationship between their own personal welfare and these matters.

An insight into the minutes of Cabinet meetings following President Eisenhower’s heart attack in late 1955 and the preparation efforts of his 1956 message reveals the dilemmas of the incapacitated Rhetorical President in constructing his *visual leadership* in the age of television. As President Ei-

14. Memo, Chriss Winston to the President, “Markwell Letter in State of the Union,” January 31, 1990, 10:48 A.M. WHORM: Subject File-Gen. Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union 1990, Case No. 128526SS, box 32. George Bush Presidential Library.

15. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 332.

16. Memo, James P. Mitchell to Bryce Harlow, December 17, 1954, folder: Departmental Comments and Suggestions, State of Union 1955 (2), Harlow Records, Box 13. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

17. *Ibid.*

senhower could not deliver the State of the Union in person, Vice President Nixon became concerned about “substance and general tone rather than organization.”¹⁸ For Secretary Humphrey organization was important and he personally preferred it much more not to go “into detail on a hundred things,” which could be addressed later in special messages. The long and detailed message, he noted, would not have held people’s attention unless *the President had delivered it personally*. Secretary Benson challenged Humphrey’s suggestion. He noted that the people might have expected something more than just a statement of principles. Humphrey agreed, but only as far as specifics would be laid out on few important things, “but not minor details of special activities and special bills.” For Humphrey it was not enough to “compress” the message, as Nixon suggested, it was necessary to “change approach.”¹⁹ Secretary Dulles raised the question as to the form in which the Soru would be presented: would it be read by the Clerk or covered by radio? This situation was new.²⁰ Nixon was aware that in situations when the President does not deliver the Soru in person, it is sent down by the President and read to the Congress by the Clerk. Dulles doubted, however, that “there would be many on Floor, probably not more than 50. No joint session,” “practically no live audience.” Thus, the message “should have in it features that would appeal to various elements of the reading public.”²¹ There was an agreement that

18. State of the Union Message Comments by Cabinet Members, 12/2/55. Folder: State of the Union January 1956 (3). Eisenhower Dwight David.: Papers as President of the United States, 1953–61, (Ann Whitman File), Speech Series, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

19. State of the Union Message Comments by Cabinet Members, 12/2/55. Folder: State of the Union January 1956 (3). Eisenhower, Dwight David: Papers as President of the United States, 1953–61, (Ann Whitman File), Speech Series, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Own emphasis.

20. Roosevelt in 1945 and Eisenhower in 1956 addressed the American people via radio with a summary of their reports. Out of 98 Sorus since Wilson (as of January 2009, and not including Obama), nineteen Sorus were written reports and three most recent: Bush’s 1989, Clinton’s 1993 and G. W. Bush’s 2001 are not considered Sorus but addresses on the Administration Goals.

21. State of the Union Message Comments by Cabinet Members, 12/2/55. Folder: State of the Union January 1956 (3). Eisenhower Dwight David.: Papers as President of the United States, 1953–61, (Ann Whitman File), Speech Series, Box 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

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a detailed speech would not have much appeal particularly when read by a clerk. Apart from the question of form, the question of length was raised up at the Cabinet meeting. Aware that the message was intended to be read and that no more than three newspapers would publish the message in full; Secretary Dulles suggested that pieces of the message appealing to different sections be printed in different parts of the country. From the standpoint of reading it, Nixon noted, the message should be “shorter, with great general principles in it.” On the other hand, he did not think a State of the Union Address “can be that way.”²² No other message has ever reached the same status in the minds of the public. The SOTU lays out the whole program of any Administration and people refer back to the SOTU. Despite Vice President’s suggestion not to make the SOTU of 1956 different from Eisenhower’s previous SOTUS, the President was, in fact, not fully in charge of things and his message was read by the clerk.

The audience is what presidential staff keeps in mind at every step of speech preparation. When the first draft of Kennedy’s 1962 SOTU was put together and Sorensen thought it was “largely a laundry list,” he asked his colleagues to use “poetic pen to transform some nuts-and-bolts into some soaring passages and applause-winning climaxes.”²³ President Ford’s counsel and speechwriter Robert Hartmann instructed the speechwriting team that they should be “primarily concerned with how the speech communicated with the American public, and not concerned about whether the Congress liked it.”²⁴ In preparing President Bush for the presentation of his SOTU, his staff would anticipate the applause lines and mark asterisks on the draft. In addition, Bush’s writers consistently produced thematic rather than programmatic SOTUS because thematic speeches have more appeal over programmatic—state of the government—speeches. In a thematic message, each action must be deeply rooted and explained in the US pursuit for the realization and spread

22. *Ibid.*

23. Note, January 8, 1962, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961–63. State of the Union Message 1/11/62 Memoranda 12/22/61–1/19/62 + undated. Box 70. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

24. Memo, Robert T. Hartmann to the President, January 6, 1976. Folder: 1/19/76 SOTU Memo to the President. Hartmann Papers, Box 181. Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

of some American values. The study carried out by presidential speechwriter Dan McGroarty and a White House researcher Peggy Dooley concluded that, “strong Presidents in America’s past who have seized the initiative in setting a legislative course for the country have without exception delivered more thematic State of the Union addresses.”²⁵ The advantage of the thematic SOTU over the programmatic one lied “in reaching and moving the people.”²⁶ Bush’s 1990 SOTU was “a shorter speech, more thematic than usual.”²⁷ The goal presidential aides wanted to achieve with a shorter, inspirational speech, was that when the President finishes the speech, his supporters should think to themselves, “Damn right!” A programmatic SOTU that includes litanies of programs and spending increases do not provoke a “Damn right!” response. The Address would have got a favorable response, if it had explained the meaning of the President’s initiatives to ordinary folks. And this is what a thematic, inspirational address does. “Program and budget talk is inside-the-beltway-talk. Results is what people care most about and, to boot, results are positive, forward-looking.”²⁸ A thematic message, however, may not resonate well with the Congress.²⁹

The State of the Union not only sets the tone for the legislative program for an incoming session of the Congress, but at the same time, it is a means to educate the country to the need for the program. Both these functions can be carried out effectively with the help of technology and communication

25. Memo, David Demarest to the President, “State of the Union Address,” December 11, 1989, WHORM: Subject File-Gen., Scanned Records, Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230–90 State of the Union 1990 [6] Case No. 129361 to Case No. 308099. George Bush Presidential Library.

26. Newspaper clipping, “Bush Surrenders at Home,” Alan Brinkley, *The New York Times*, folder: State of the Union 1/29/91 [OA 5 in 1], Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 4. George Bush Presidential Library.

27. President’s Talking Points, undated, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

28. Note, Charles Kolb to Tony Snow, undated, Open P2/P5 Documents, Documents 2001–2400, Box 8. George Bush Presidential Library.

29. Minutes, Meet the Press, February 2, 1992, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/28/92 [OA 7567], Office of Speechwriting, Speech File, Bush Presidential Records, box 142. George Bush Presidential Library.

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techniques. An example of how technology can help the President in reaching and moving the people was submitted to the attention of Arthur Schlesinger for consideration in the process of producing President Kennedy's 1963 SOTU. Creekmore Fath, who served on the Senate Freedom of Communications Subcommittee, suggested that the President's SOTU could have been presented not only as a speech, but "an hour-long State of the Union documentary film shown on nationwide television in prime time."³⁰ That idea could be approached in two ways,

At the beginning of the session, by resolution, we could secure permission to provide a screen at the Speaker's podium and mount a camera in the House gallery to show the documentary film in place of the regular State of the Union message, with the President personally delivering a short prologue and epilogue. Or, the President could deliver his usual State of the Union message to the Congress, and later that evening he could present his special documentary film on the State of the Union to the contrary from the White House. ... Then, too, we would have a picture pamphlet selling the program instead of the routine speech."³¹

Although there may have been "the kernel of an idea," it never materialized.³² Nor did Harold E. Stassen's idea to present "a brief message on film" following President Eisenhower's heart attack.³³ Had these ideas materialized, they would have broken the accepted manner of presidential personal communication with Congress. More importantly, a completely new medium through which the SOTU would have been presented, would have raised ques-

30. Letter, Creekmore Fath to Arthur Schlesinger Jr., June 12, 1962. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63. Folder: State of the Union Message 1/14/63 memoranda 6/14/62-12/26/62, Box 76. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Memo, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. to Theodore C. Sorensen, June 14, 1962. Sorensen Papers, JFK Speech Files 1961-63. State of the Union Message 1/14/63 memoranda 6/14/62-12/26/62, Box 76. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

33. State of the Union Message Comments by Cabinet Members, 12/2/55. Folder: State of the Union January 1956 (3). Eisenhower Dwight David. Papers as President of the United States, 1953-61, (Ann Whitman File), Speech Series, Box No. 14. Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library. Own emphasis.

tions about whether visual leadership remained only complementary form of leadership.

Although the advancement of technology and mass communication increased the size and immediacy of the President's audience, Corwin and Koenig pointed out that "they have in some ways made his job more complicated and difficult."³⁴ The visible aspects of speech presentation such as presidential appearance, clothing, effective delivery, body language, the ability to connect with the audience have become almost as important as the speech itself. As the following section demonstrates, preparing the President for the presentation of the speech involves a great deal of effort and advance planning. President Lyndon Baines Johnson's aides in particular were concerned with what the President looked like and how he sounded, and his case is thus most useful to understanding the demands of presidential *visual leadership*.

VISUAL LEADERSHIP IN THE SERVICE OF WANING CREDIBILITY: THE CASE OF PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON

Until the Johnson presidency, the problem with the State of the Union Addresses, as Richard Neustadt pointed out while advising on Johnson's 1966 SOTU, was that these annual Addresses "suffered from being televised at a lousy viewing when they make a minimum of impact on the general viewing public."³⁵ In the sixties, politicians started to become more and more aware of the impact of the ever-growing California population on national politics and election turnout. Already in 1965 President Johnson shifted the broadcast of the Address from midday to evening to attract the attention of a working California voter. For the first time, the State of the Union speech got live color coverage. President Johnson wore a gray flannel suit especially chosen for his color TV appearance. The impact on TV audience was so important

34. Corwin and Koenig, *The Presidency Today*, 66.

35. 1/12/66 Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. Richard Neustadt Ideas. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson, January 12, 1966, Box 172. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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that Richard Goodwin urged Johnson not to give advance copies of his 1965 speech so that those in Chamber “were expectantly to hear what is coming next and give a spontaneous reaction when they hear it.”³⁶

The increased concern for Johnson’s image can be linked to the first evening broadcast and color coverage in 1965, but soon also to Johnson’s eroding credibility. Riots, frustration over Vietnam, taxation, increased federal spending, were driving his polls down from 1966 onward. To improve the President’s performance and boost his image, Johnson’s deputy press secretary and former chief of NBC News Washington Bureau, Robert Fleming, reviewed the video tape of Johnson’s 1967 State of the Union and found some issues, which needed improvement. First, the President was too fast to draw applause and Fleming encouraged him to pause to let the applause come, as slower pace and moderate pause give audience time to digest ideas and may affect the applause.³⁷ Fleming also stressed the importance of lighting, suggesting that no more light should be put on the President, but more on the audience and the back wall to reduce eyestrain for the President. Light on Vice-President and the Speaker should be diminished after Speaker McCormack introduces the President, so they would be less evident in the background. Fleming noted that while television picture’s frame does not permit expansive gestures, or the content may not suggest them, the President could use hands for emphasis, as he did when he stressed the surtax proposal. Tight shots of the President should be taken that showed him from just above his Silver Star lapel button up to a small stripe of space over his head. This, Fleming reasoned, was tight enough because on the 21-inch television screen it made Johnson’s face slightly larger than life, yet adequate to hold the individual viewer’s attention. A closer shot would be abnormal for the home living room and as he pointed out, individual features of the President’s face could have drawn attention from the content of his message. Alternatively, a slightly

36. Dick Goodwin to the President, 1/12/66, 1/12/66 Annual Message on the State of the Union, Dick Goodwin drafts. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

37. Memo, Bob Fleming to the President, January 15, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Memorandum 12/02/66–1/17/68. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

wider picture was used to show the President and the Vice President and remind the audience that the speech was addressed to the Congress. Bob Fleming also suggested that for better cut-away selections of the audience, the director could be provided with the text of the message ahead of time for his advice. He also recommended giving the networks Mrs. Johnson's seating plan of her guests and a reference list of persons that might be shown in the audience. Names of these persons could appear under the picture of a person appearing on the screen. The President also used two side QTV mirrors raised and the center one lowered, so as not be apparent to the viewers. Fleming encouraged the President to use the front screen, which not only permitted the President a better eye contact with the home viewer, but also made more use of the direct speaking to the TV audience. Fleming also addressed aural aspects of Johnson's delivery. He urged to review word-phrase constructions in the text before the delivery to help the President avoid, for instance, mis-speaking of *r* in the constructions which invited oral traps. President Johnson was skilled at wetting his lips with his tongue. Speech experts considered it a good device, for it not only dampened the lips, but provided a muscle "change of pace" for the throat.³⁸

Technical aspects of the broadcast were also important. Robert E. Kintner, former NBC President, presented a critical analysis of what the President could gain from his talk. Kintner projected that with the declining popularity, the Johnson Administration would have to fear "the loss of confidence." He anticipated that the President's 1968 SOTU would have some 50–60 million radio and television audiences. Speaking to a large audience, however, required two speaking styles: the determined, dynamic style and the subdued, calm, "interspaced on a time and subject basis."³⁹ Key to the President's success with the speech was to "devise a speech simple, interesting, and easy to deliver," so that the President could "hold the audience and to devise counter moves, to be planned now, to minimize Republican and unfriendly

38. Ibid.

39. Memo, Robert E. Kintner to the President, January 13, 1968. Folder: 1/17/68 State of the Union 1968. Memorandum 12/02/66–1/17/68. Statements of Lyndon Baines Johnson President, 1963–1969. January 17, 1968. Box 260. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

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Democratic reaction.” He also noted that the public would only have stayed tuned, if the President’s statement had had interested them and affected them as individuals, and was well delivered in correct technical setting—in good lighting and make-up. Kintner noted that 1968 Address was as important as the first Kennedy–Nixon debate in terms of the overall impression. Therefore, he argued,

the technical aspects of pick-up are very important; the physical appearance of the President is a key factor and the President must prepare for the talk as any actor would rehearse. The President must be at ease as Lyndon B. Johnson; the contents must answer questions in the minds of the public, succinctly and understandably, and there is no need to “reach” for Churchillian rhetoric. The last-minute changes—generally unimportant anyway—must be sacrificed for effectiveness. The talk should not have “too many cooks” in final preparation nor should amateur television experts interfere with the networks, as a pool.⁴⁰

The lighting set-up in the House of Representatives also needed improvement. Kintner suggested that a “lighting expert” and “preferably, one used to entertainment shows” be contacted. In order to show the President and his family at their best prior to leaving for Congress, Kintner obtained from NBC Mr. O’Maro, who was to improve the East Room and the best lighting expert from ABC, who usually reviewed the House set-up. The four scenes that he considered as key were the President’s entrance, his talk, the President’s exit, and shots of Mrs. Johnson. He also pointed out that as the two people behind the President were “‘old’ in a youth society—the less director ordered pick-up of the reaction of Speaker McCormack and Senator Hayden and the less emphasis given these, the better.” Shots of the House floor were important, only if the congressional reaction was favorable. The key shots of the Democratic reaction were to include Mrs. Johnson and the President’s family, Congressman Albert, Senator Mansfield.

The second technical precaution was make-up, to “insure you look as you are.” Although make-up was a personal matter between the President

40. Ibid.

and the make-up expert, the President was advised to listen to whomever he selected. The best make-up experts were to be asked to study the lighting in the House of Representatives “to the objective of President Johnson appearing as President Johnson—not prettified, not unnatural, but also not pale and unhealthy.” The President “as any performer” had to give an expert time and “put himself at the mercy of the make-up expert.” His clothes should be selected for color television—the best dark suit and possibly a light blue shirt.

Two touchy points that Kintner mentioned to the President concerned the use of glasses and spending more time in familiarizing himself with the text. Johnson seemed to think that wearing glasses made him older, but Kintner encouraged the President to wear it, as people wanted to see the President as he really is. He encouraged Johnson to sacrifice last minute changes for the best delivery, so that he could almost give it by heart. The President was advised to rehearse already semi-final drafts. For the best results, the President should practice the speech at least nine times—three times silently to himself in a room alone, three times in front of a mirror—which makes performers at ease, and three times in front of one or two people that he was at ease with, including his wife, Mrs. Johnson.

To even further enhance presidential performance, Johnson was advised to avoid personal habits of “moving back and forth and putting your weight first on one foot and then on another.” To avoid that habit, the President could “put one foot slightly more backward.” Another of Johnson’s tendencies was to smile slightly when he was “making attacks or advocating changes.” Kintner suggested forgetting smiling. To break ice, the President could try a simple ad-lib opening and be “determined, confident, non-smiling, experienced, healthy, leader as you undoubtedly are, and as what the advertising agencies call ‘your image’.”

In the atmosphere when most of the newspaper and magazine reporters, columnists, and broadcasters were not friendly to Johnson, he suggested to release the text of the SOTU as early as practical. He reminded that in 1967, “reporters of all media, editors responsible for make-up and distribution schedules were behind themselves in anger, when Moyers did not give out

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the text until 7:30 P.M. and 8:00 P.M.” The President lost the printing of the message in early high circulation editions of Eastern Time zone newspapers and broadcasters had very little time to digest the message content.

Publicity should be pre-planned. As for the SOTU style, it should be “short sentences, simple, easily understood by a mass audience, and easy to deliver for television. No big words, no State Department language; in fact, no government phrases impossible to understand.”⁴¹ President Johnson demanded “speeches in which the sentences were clear and words were not multi-syllabled. He wanted a little poetry in his speeches. He liked alliteration. He liked his speeches to have something that was of a newsworthy character, some idea or an expression of facts that would surprise and interest people. But he was not terribly preoccupied with any particular style.”⁴² This may have been the reason why LBJ had a problem with maintaining credibility in his public statements. As *The New York Times* correspondent, Bill Jordan, pointed out while advising on the style of one of Johnson’s State of the Unions, the President’s public, formal utterances did not reflect the man and his unique approach to problems and people. The authentic Johnson flavor was apparent when the President talked with small groups and moved around the people. The same distinctive Johnson style and its audible aspects were not coming through to the listeners and readers of his public statements. Particularly, the tone of Johnson’s early presidential speeches was “a Kennedy or pseudo-Kennedy.” And when the President is asked “in one speech to quote from Lord Durham, Woodrow Wilson, Pericles, the Canadian Prime Minister, and Franklin Roosevelt, that is not Lyndon Johnson that is talking ... what

41. Ibid.

42. Transcript, Douglass Cater Oral History Interview II, 5/8/69, by David G. McComb, Internet Copy, retrieved on April 2., 2008 from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/cater/cater02.pdf>, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library. What the President was preoccupied with were the post-SOTU reaction shows. Following the Address, the President returned to the White House and watched commentaries on three networks—there were three sets to enable him to watch all three at the same time. See: *The President’s Daily Diary 12/1/68–1/20/69*. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963–1969. Box 18. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

comes through is an erroneous picture of the man, of his style of leadership, of his approach to profound problems that confront us.”⁴³

Speech Rehearsals

As a former teacher of public speaking and debate coach,⁴⁴ Johnson understood the importance of rehearsals. President Johnson typically practiced delivery several times a day in the Theater Room of the Mansion and until the last moment prior to the presentation in Congress.⁴⁵ President Ford, on the other hand, would not spend too much time rehearsing his speeches. One of his speechwriters noted that the President would learn “from his audiences as any good speaker does.”⁴⁶ Ford would also watch himself on the TV newscasts. As for the rehearsals, he would “read the final speech over to himself and mark it so that when he is in front of his audience, he knows what points to stress. He has a system of underscoring and slashes that guides his delivery of the speech. He will then read it once out loud and that’s as much rehearsing as is done. The President just doesn’t have the time to stand in front of a mirror and rehearse.”⁴⁷

President Bush tried to abandon the leadership style of President Reagan. As Jeffrey Tulis noted, “Reagan made the Rhetorical Presidency a rage in Washington. How else could a President operate effectively, except by going over the heads of Congress to the American people? Stirring the nation to action was supposed to be the President’s first priority. It’s not Bush’s.”⁴⁸

43. Memo, W. J. Jorden to Douglass Cater, “A Note on Style,” September 18, 1964. Cater, Douglass: Memos to the President September–November, 1964. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President 1963–1969, Files of Douglass Cater, Box 13. Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

44. Harry Provence, *Lyndon B. Johnson: A Biography* (New York: Fleet Publishing Corporation, 1964), 37–38.

45. The President’s Daily Diary 12/1/68–1/20/69. Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, President, 1963–1969. Box 18. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

46. “Speech writing in the Ford Administration: an interview with presidential speech writer Robert Orben,” Gage William Chapel, *Exetasis* Vol. 3, No. 1, (June 15, 1976). Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Tulis, “Revising the Rhetorical Presidency,” 6.

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President Bush's approach may have indicated the return to the role of a constitutional officer, but he too soon fell into the traps of the Rhetorical Presidency. As Bush's Chief of Staff, John H. Sununu remembered, "He would read a paragraph or a sentence, but he wouldn't go from top to bottom, very rarely." And on the State of the Union speeches, the President would do a couple of rehearsals. "We set up something in the theater on a couple of the State of the Union Addresses, and he went through the whole thing. He did, or almost the whole thing."⁴⁹ The President received make-up prior to "virtually every on camera event," including the nationally televised State of the Union Address.⁵⁰ In order to re-create the House Chamber, the President was speaking from behind a podium and reading off a teleprompter in that session in the presence of his closest staffers and WHCA personnel: audio mixer, teleprompter operator, audio supervisor, and also White House Television Personnel: camera operator, record operator, playback operator, technical supervisor.⁵¹ One hour was set aside for a rehearsal.⁵²

President Kennedy also rehearsed his State of the Unions. The President and several staff members timed certain speech sections with a stopwatch and made cuts and excisions on the speech.⁵³

49. Miller Center, "Interview with John H. Sununu (06/2000)." University of Virginia. June 8–9, 2000, retrieved on March 16, 2014 from <http://millercenter.org/president/bush/oralhistory/john-sununu-1>.

50. Daily Schedule, "Speech Preparations," Dorrance Smith, January 27, 1992. Office of Appointments and Scheduling, Presidential Daily Backup, 1/28/92, OA/ID CF1812. George Bush Presidential Library.

51. Memo, Briefing Memorandum for Speech Rehearsal Session, Barrie Tron to David Demarest, Chriss Winston, Kristin Clark Taylor, January 31, 1991, Bush Presidential Records, Presidential Daily Backup, 1/31/91. George Bush Presidential Library.

52. Daily Schedule, Rehearsal for State of the Union, David Demarest to the President, January 27, 1992, Office of Appointments and Scheduling, Presidential Daily Backup, 1/28/92, OA/ID CF1812. George Bush Presidential Library.

53. Tape 69: Congo; Cuba; Latin America; Vietnam; State of the Union address; Joint Chiefs of Staff. John F. Kennedy Library. Presidential Recording Log. John F. Kennedy Library.

Teleprompter

LBJ understood the importance of maintaining a closer contact with his audience. Johnson wanted to be able to read his speech while looking at the audience. The idea of using the teleprompter may have come from Bob Fleming. Fleming, reportedly, had seen Teleprompters in the television environment, where they were very common. For President Johnson the teleprompter worked out “extremely well.” Before President Johnson delivered his 1968 SOTU, he rehearsed it as many as thirteen times. The “biggest problems” came on days when the State of the Union was delivered. Albright recalled that Johnson

... went through it and he'd tear it up and he'd add to it and the staff writers were there. As we were rehearsing again—it's now about eight-fifteen at night—and we're sitting in the theater and we're rehearsing, he finally turns to me and he said, “Have you got any suggestions for this thing?” I said, “No, Mr. President, I've heard them all day long.” He said, “Well, are you going to have time to make corrections and get it on there?” I said, “Yes, if you quit about twenty minutes to nine I'll make it.” Because the corrections had to be typed in, pasted in, cut in place, on not three rolls but four rolls of paper ... because there's one on each side. “Each one of these is a roll of paper, a huge roll of yellow paper, and each one goes in the teleprompter. They are remotely controlled by somebody back in the back but he's got to look at it, too. And they all synchronize, they're all following the same sequence and so on. On that occasion I made it, I had the police escort me, and I got in there and got it into the things at one minute to nine. He came in at nine, I'm one minute ahead of him.⁵⁴

The principal difference in his speaking style resulting from the use of the teleprompter was that President Johnson had more eye contact with the audience and more confidence because he didn't have “to try to do the second function of fumbling with what page he's on or following it there. And even

54. Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, “Interview with Jack Albright” by Michael L. Gillette, retrieved on February 22, 2008 from <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/Albright-J/Albright1.pdf>.

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though we printed it in the book, you never had print that large. The type of print for a speech is not that big. The speech for the typewriter for that teleprompter was huge print ... that was magnified, too.” There were 20 podiums and teleprompter sets altogether for President Johnson.⁵⁵

Ford had a reputation of not being particularly strong at making speeches. The President’s reading of 1976 SOTU was remembered for “unexciting speaking style” and “occasional misreading of words in the text.”⁵⁶ The first time President Ford ever used the teleprompter was when he rehearsed the presentation of his State of the Union preview. It allowed the President to appear to speak directly to the people. Ford’s professional television adviser, Bob Mead, also inserted cues into the teleprompter for Ford to follow—“Stand up. ... Start sit. ... Change camera.”⁵⁷ Robert Mead helped President Ford adapt his style to television and introduced him to the idea of a teleprompter. In addition, President Ford was advised not to eat prior to the broadcast of his speech so as not to hiccup air, relax and take a swim and down a shot of bourbon.⁵⁸

The teleprompter copy of the President’s SOTU was typed in large font, capital letters with only three or four paragraphs per page. The asterisks on the draft were used to mark the anticipated applause lines.⁵⁹ Based on a careful observation of President Bush’s performance of his 1989 SOTU and his minor mistakes, Lilyan Wilder attracted the President’s attention to several ingredients of a successful speech: the speaker should be able to connect his thoughts with his words; be totally in the speech and podium, and focus on the viewers. When using a teleprompter, the speaker should be able to make an impression on TV audience that he does not use it. The speech should be

55. Ibid.

56. Bo Callaway to Dick Cheney. “Reactions to the State of the Union message.” January 20, 1976. Folder: State of the Union (2) David Gergen Files, Box 9. Gerald R. Ford Library.

57. Yanek Mieczkowski, *Gerald Ford and the challenges of the 1970s* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 159.

58. Ibid.

59. Draft, January 30, 1990, folder: State of the Union Address, 1/31/90 (OA 4391) (2), Office of Speechwriting, Bush Presidential Records, box 45. George Bush Presidential Library.

uninterrupted, continuous, and build to climaxes. A speaker should not step on applause and be sensitive to audience's desire to respond; he should not speak when the audience is applauding. If one phrase is repeated more than once, the speaker should try to repeat it in such a way that it has a meaning each time; pause before beginning the conclusion. Most importantly, the speaker should say what he or she means and mean what he or she says.⁶⁰

OVER THE HEAD OF THE PRESIDENT. PRESIDENTIAL-CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS AND THE SOTU

As demonstrated above, a President who seizes visual leadership in his SOTU is not concerned with Congress. When President Wilson decided to address Congress personally, his chief goal was to redress the defects of the American government. He did not require any response from Congress other than acting on his proposals. Instead of correcting these relations and encouraging more cooperation between the Congress and the President, since the '60s the disunity has been institutionalized in *the opposition response* that immediately follows the President's Address. *The opposition response* was an innovation initiated by the Republican Party in 1966 following LBJ's shift of the State of the Union Address from midday to evening in 1965. In consequence of that shift, the SOTU became a great political event. The Republican Leadership of the Congress, in view of indications that the television networks planned only to videotape the Republican response for later, indefinite reply, demanded that such major networks as American Broadcasting Company, the Columbia Broadcasting System, and the National Broadcasting Company made possible live television coverage of the response for the advantage of the American people. The Republican Party attempted to go over the head of the President but it had to face one of the problems of the two-party system: the built-in publicity advantage the incumbent President had over the opposition. Simply

60. Memorandum, Lilyan Wilder to the President, "State of the Union January 31, 1990." February 13, 1990, WHORM: Subject File—Gen. Bush Presidential Records, folder: SP 230-90 State of the Union-1990, Case No. 115224 to Case No. 197301, box 34. George Bush Presidential Library.

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because he was the President, Lyndon Johnson could have dominated the front page and the airwaves whenever he chose.⁶¹ Senator Everett Dirksen, Senate Minority Leader and House Minority Leader Gerald Ford delivered the first Republican State of the Union in the old Supreme Court Chamber in the Capitol at 9 P.M. EST on January 17, 1966. Aware of what a serious factor television was in political competition, Gerald Ford espoused the Republican cause in seeking equal treatment from the television networks. In his part of the Republican response, Ford proposed legislation which would require “television and radio to provide free and equal treatment to major parties and their spokesmen not only in future campaigns and presentations of divergent political views”⁶² Thus *the opposition response* that follows the SOTU has grown out of political competition for equal television time. The alleged elimination of the opposition party from the policy formation process provided a convenient rationale for the opposition in seeking visibility and seizing visual leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

The medium of television exerts influence on the audience, affects its mode of perception, and motivates the content. Despite the fact that the SOTU was instrumental in the development of the President’s legislative leadership, with the birth of broadcast media, the visible and audible aspects of presidential performance became increasingly important. The President became the focus of attention. The speech would be broadcast in prime time, stressing the importance of communicating with the viewers across America. The technically controlled image and sound, the overworked speaking style and gestures of a President appearing on television have become the content of the broadcast. As a result, presidential aides would become more and more concerned with the President’s image and would thoroughly analyze presidential public ap-

61. Clayton Fritchey, “State of Affairs,” *Newsday*, January 25, 1967. Folder: Republican State of the Union, 1967 – General (3). Hartmann Papers, Box 96. Gerald Ford Presidential Library.

62. *Ibid.*

pearances to anticipate issues that needed improvement. Technology became a resource that provided opportunities for visual leadership, but it would also make the President's and his advisers' job even more time-consuming and demanding.

As the present chapter demonstrates, preparing the President for the live presentation of the SOTU would require a great deal of advance planning, including rehearsals, makeup, learning to use the teleprompter and appropriate lighting. In modern times, a SOTU read by the clerk would raise questions as to the President's capacity to lead. President Eisenhower's advisers, for instance, were concerned with how to structure the SOTU in order to appeal to the public, and to the reading public in particular, when the President did not deliver the SOTU in person. What comes as a surprise is the lack of archival evidence concerning President Kennedy's increased concern for his image during the process of preparing the President for the presentation of his SOTU; no mention of make-up sessions, nor concern over special lighting or clothing. Given Kennedy's reputation as the man who was "excessively preoccupied with his 'image'" and who apparently concentrated more on "selling" himself and his family rather than his ideas,⁶³ Kennedy's preparatory efforts seem meager in comparison to, for instance, his immediate successor's—Lyndon B. Johnson's. Perhaps because of Kennedy's pleasing and amiable personality, his youth and glamour, Johnson would have to try harder to earn public affection and meet public expectations; particularly as it was Johnson, not Kennedy, that shifted the broadcast of the SOTU from mid-day to evening. The shift has not only increased the SOTU audience, but also increased the workload that would have to go into the preparation of the President prior to delivery. In the case of Lyndon Johnson, there is also a strong link between Johnson's care for his image and his waning popularity. To involve the nation in the office of the Presidency, Lyndon Johnson changed the time of the speech to the evening in 1965, but soon his presidency would start to grow more and more unpopular. Johnson's advisers would become more concerned with the rhetorical and visual dimension of the office. Since

63. Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, 714.

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the Johnson presidency, also the opposition in Congress would compete for attention by reviving the old custom of reply to the President's Address with the help of modern resource—live television broadcast of the opposition response. Importantly, as LBJ's case illustrates, visible and audible aspects, though important, were not meant to draw the audience's attention from the content of his Addresses. In the case of personally delivered SOTUS, visual leadership remains complementary to legislative leadership, yet inseparable, in the television age.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

By reawakening attention to the historical origins and contemporary practice of the State of the Union Address, the present study sought to explore whether and in what way the changes associated with the emergence of the Rhetorical Presidency, that is, the transformation in the pattern of communication of the US Presidents, may have affected “the speechwriting infrastructure”—the people and procedures which were responsible for coordinating the State of the Union preparatory process under Presidents: Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Ford and Bush. By focusing on the SOTU speechwriting infrastructure, the present study also addressed such enduring issues in presidential speechwriting as: relationship of speechwriters to policy formation, access to the President, constraints attending the speechwriting process, and relation of speechmaking to leadership.

By employing the institutional approach and integrating it with the concept of the Rhetorical Presidency, the present study aimed to produce a fuller understanding of how the changes in the nature and conduct of the office initiated by President Woodrow Wilson may have affected the routine processes and procedures of producing and presenting the SOTU. By studying the composition of the core presidential advisory resources during the SOTU process, the institutional approach helps explain who generates policy input for the State of the Union Addresses, the role of key presidential speechwriters, and how the President utilizes his the core advisory resources in the SOTU process, including the Executive Office of the President, his personal White House Office staff, and the Cabinet. Most importantly, the institutional approach reveals how the power is shared by these different entities in the SOTU process and who, in the end, has the upper hand in developing US

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policies—the President or the Cabinet. With the exception of the Ford presidency, increased White House control over policy initiatives was generally the practice throughout the period investigated in the present study. Policy initiatives and policy-related concerns would be centralized in the White House. The Presidents and their staff routinely shape the national agenda.

The title of the present work: “THE TOUGHEST SEASON IN THE WHITE HOUSE”: THE RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY AND THE STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS, 1953–1992 was chosen to suggest that in consequence of the transformation in the pattern of communication, the process of producing the State of the Union Addresses became more demanding and time-consuming. The SOTU delivered personally by the President could no longer include merely a rundown of departmental reports, as was the case in the nineteenth century when the President sent his Annual Message to Congress, where it was read by the House clerk. The change in the manner of delivery would have to be adjusted to the new media and the different audiences that would listen to and watch the presentation of the Address. In addition, extra time would have to be allocated to preparing the President for the personal presentation of the Address, including speech rehearsals, make-up, and teleprompter sessions. In addition, as the White House increased control over policy initiatives, the President would have to rely on more and more people, and the preparatory process would last over an extended period of time.

The impact of the aforesaid transformation on the State of the Union Addresses in particular, however, was in many ways different from what Jeffrey Tulis and others attributed to it in general. The SOTU process and “the speechwriting infrastructure” remain largely unaffected by most of the negative consequences associated with rise of the Rhetorical Presidency. Several facts provide evidence for that claim:

As the present work demonstrates, and this is one of the most important findings, the transformation in the pattern of communication did not eliminate deliberation from the process of composing the SOTU. In the course of developing ideas for the Address, numerous meetings and discussions take place, attended by both the core advisory resources (e.g. the Cabinet, the White House staff) and the informal sources (e.g. academics, intellectuals,

governors). In addition, the President may decide to travel around the country in search of new ideas for his SOTU. The modern presidency has become more complex in terms of its organization and it is precisely the aggregate of individuals involved in the SOTU preparatory processes that reflects the essence of Wilsonian conception of “responsible government,” which stresses genuine deliberation and cooperation of the entire government. Cooperation is vital to the completion of the SOTU.

In consequence of the transformation in the pattern of communication, presidential success is shaped also by his own efforts. In fact, the chief executives have become involved in activities that go beyond the scope of their formal constitutional powers. Presidential involvement in the SOTU drafting process will in great measure depend on an individual President, his writing abilities, the abilities of his speechwriters, time available for speechwriting, and the President’s personal attitude to rhetoric. While there is plenty of evidence that Presidents Eisenhower, Johnson and Ford would be personally involved in the actual drafting of their SOTUS, Presidents Kennedy’s and Bush’s involvement in drafting can be described as passive. Their handwriting on the SOTU drafts is indiscernible, if not non-existent. Yet the SOTU is the task the President cannot escape. Although with varying intensity at different stages of the process, the Presidents on whom the present study focused, initiated the annual programming process, participated in meetings with policy experts, intellectuals, edited drafts, rehearsed the SOTU speech, and importantly, made decisions that affected the overall approach to their SOTUS. Surprisingly, however, the Presidents for whom the rhetorical dimension of the office was not a high priority, including Eisenhower and Ford in particular, were most concerned with and personally involved in their SOTUS.

Contrary to Jeffrey Tulis’ claim, speechwriting in the White House, as the present study demonstrates, did not become the domain of language experts, or wordsmiths. Rather, throughout most of the examined period, speechwriting was integrated with policymaking and it was a reflection of policy decisions made by the President. Although the present study confirms Charles Walcott and Karen Hult’s, and Robert Schlesinger’s observation that specialized speechcrafters were added to the speechwriting infrastructure during the

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Johnson presidency, Bob Hardesty and Will Sparks, who appeared in the White House in 1965, were not aides and they had no policy responsibilities. They were merely to restate the established policy decisions. Hardesty and Sparks made an attempt at the State of the Union Address in 1966, but no substantial language suggested by them for Johnson's '66 SOTU could be traced in the final version of the Address. Despite the fact that specialized speechcrafters were added to the speechwriting infrastructure during the Johnson presidency, the present study demonstrates that it was not until the Bush presidency that writers with no specific policy expertise would be charged with drafting presidential SOTUS. Bush's drafters were not policy advisers and their relation to the President was rather distant. The reliance on writers who changed annually, rather than presidential top aides with a gift for writing, suggests a decreased interest of the Bush Administration in producing policy-oriented Addresses. This does not mean, however, that presidential top aides would cease to participate in the process of shaping the contents of the SOTUS. President Bush's thematic and largely ceremonial SOTUS, however, are not necessarily indicative of how such negative consequences associated with the rise of the Rhetorical Presidency as the appearance of specialized speechcrafters in the White House affected the SOTU process. Rather, they reflect the President's choices and his approach to communication that does not view the presidency as a bully pulpit. The Rhetorical Presidency is the concept useful to understanding the historical changes in the pattern of presidential communication, but it must be emphasized that the presidency does not undergo a linear development. Each individual President brings his own unique understanding of the office and shapes it according to his interests and needs.

Wilson transformed the presidency into a vehicle for legislative leadership and since Truman, the President has been expected to present his legislative initiatives and his Administration agenda for the coming year. The progression of the President's term, however, is beset with constraints that add up to the already demanding SOTU preparatory season. The customary deadline by which the Presidents present the SOTU causes the White House to fulfill the annual duty regardless of the circumstances. Because of limited time and

resources, a newly inaugurated President faces difficulties in producing a balanced agenda that will shape his Administration's actions for the coming year or years. The State of the Union Addresses became a routine and a time consuming activity of the presidency. The habit of going through the arduous process of producing the speech at the end of any President's term, however, is a lame effort in terms of its legislative relevance. It is highly unlikely that any incoming President will want to be maneuvered into programs initiated by his predecessor. Although the present study could not do justice to all constraints concomitant with the progression of the President's term, other scholars might want to investigate the process of producing the President's SOTU in election years to see, if the incumbents use the SOTU as a platform for reelection.

The Rhetorical Presidency influenced the way the President and his staff think about presidential speaking and leadership. The President is expected to both lead and govern (exercise his power). Leadership is influence and persuasion. Governance requires that the President's agenda (words) be turned into actions (new laws and/or federal programs). The President needs to persuade Congress to act on his proposals. Importantly, the expectation that the Rhetorical President would act as the leader of the people (head of state) has not undermined his role as the head of the government. As the present work demonstrates, acting as the head of the government, the President initiates federal policies and prepares the budget. What differentiates the Presidents examined in the present work is the question of how the individual chief executives balanced the demands of the head of the government with that of the head of state in the SOTU process. The shift to popular leadership and the advancement of technology gave the President access to a broad audience. In consequence of this shift, a further shift—beyond words—and towards visual leadership—took place. Modern SOTUs are designed to be heard, not read. Thus, the visible and audible aspects of presidential performance would gain in importance. The President himself became the message. Not only what the President says, but his outfit, gestures, looks, eye contact with the audience would become important. They would, however, require extra time, effort, and preparation, and add up to an already long and arduous preparatory

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season. Importantly, as the SOTU process illustrates, visual leadership remains complementary to legislative leadership, yet inseparable, in the television age.

The present work provides evidence that not all Presidents under study would be equally concerned with visible and audible aspects of their presentations. A tendency to go beyond words to pay an increased attention to the President's image depends on many factors, including the President's personal preferences and his standing in the polls, rather than a pervasive consequence of the transformation in the pattern of communication. It is because general claims one makes about the Rhetorical Presidency do not necessarily apply to individual Presidents. Each President made his original contribution to the Rhetorical Presidency and each was in different measure affected by the consequences associated with its rise and its impact on speechwriting, and the presentation of the SOTU. In general, however, the State of the Union Address is the presidential genre of discourse, which is the product of careful deliberation. To speak of the impact of the transformation in the pattern of communication on other presidential genres, such as inaugural or farewell addresses, veto or war messages, would require studies that focus specifically on the processes of producing these particular presidential genres.

The SOTU has become a permanent fixture in American political culture. Surprisingly, the Address that managed to earn the title of the Mother Speech and the audience of millions of viewers, rarely affects the President's job approval ratings, rarely leads to broad legislative accomplishments and yet, it requires almost a year of concerted efforts and preparations of the entire federal bureaucracy. For the President and the speechwriters assigned to the task of crafting the speech, it is a death march, a night and day operation. There is no holiday season in the White House as both the President and his closest staff work over Christmas and the New Year's Day. The American Presidents are stuck with the SOTU. Each chief executive must find his own way to it and make it through the toughest season in the White House, year after year.

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