

National Security Council Staff Size

It is common for an administration to come into power thinking the past administration's NSC staff was too large and unwieldy. It was also common to see staff size reduced initially only to see it grow back later under the pressures of geo-strategic events. Still, there is an apparent consensus that the NSC staff should be lean and focused. Figure 1 shows the size of professional staff across administrations. Administrative support is not counted.¹

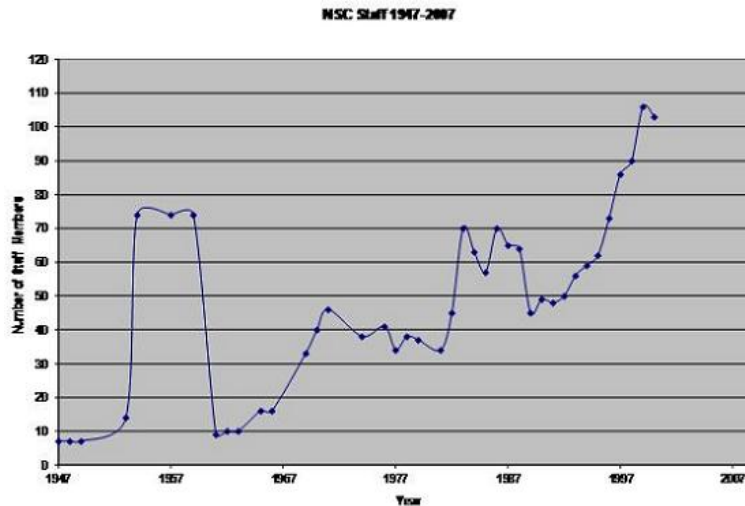


Figure 1. NSC Staff Size 1947-2007

The true numbers may change day to day, and one can legitimately quibble over who should and should not be counted. Precision is not a realistic option, but the graph shows accurate general trends. The Clinton administration added a National Economic Council in parallel with the NSC, and NEC staff members are not counted here. The Bush 43 administration established a separate Homeland Security Council and staff. The Obama administration consolidated the NSC and HSC staffs into a unified National Security Staff. These innovations make the value of further comparison questionable.

¹ Data from Kennedy to Clinton was reported in Ivo H. Daalder and I.M. Destler, "A NSC for a New Administration." Policy Brief No. 68, Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, November 2000, also reported in Inderfurth and Johnson, *Fateful Decisions*, 132. Ivo Daalder generously provided updated information from Kennedy to Bush. Data from Truman and Eisenhower administrations are from the respective presidential libraries. Numbers for the Obama administration are from CQ Press.