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Fitness for Duty: Textual Analysis of a Potential National Security Adviser

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Abstract. This article explores implications of public statements for the fitness of the foreign policy adviser to the Republican candidate for the United States (US) presidency to be his national security advisor.

The role of the US national security advisor has varied significantly since the advent of the National Security Act of 1947. A strong case can be made that, under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, the advisor functioned more as an executive secretary, an administrator, a coordinator, a systemic facilitator and transmitter, and a faithful communicator of ideas and policies. In this context, the advisor's professional and personal ideologies and policy bents were theoretically irrelevant. However, beginning with President Kennedy--although with several exceptions--the advisor has functioned more as an assessor and advocate of ideas and policies, a player of the game of bureaucratic politics in the service of advocacy, and a personal staff assistant of the President in the service of the latter's (and the advisor's own) directives and proclivities.

How then does Dr. Condoleezza Rice, foreign policy advisor to the Republican candidate for the US presidency, stack up as a future national security advisor? After all, she has been widely touted as a very likely occupier of the position if the Republican candidate is victorious. Two of her recent statements may be suggestive of her suitability.

In one statement, she has attacked US President Clinton for his inability to gain fast-track authority to negotiate trade agreements without amendments by the US Congress. She has done this even though President Clinton supported and sought fast-track authority, but was stymied by the Republican-controlled US Congress. According to Dr. Rice, "[President Clinton needed] to state an agenda and persuade and cajole people to follow it." "You can't seem halfhearted about it." Being aware of Beltway politics and following Dr. Rice's implicit logic, one would conclude that Dr. Rice and her Republican allies can do their best to intentionally stymie the President and make him fail and then blame the President for failing. This statement, then, smacks of the hyperpolitical in a partisan context and of the surreal in the context of the Republicans winning the presidency but losing control of Congress.

In another statement, Dr. Rice--while addressing the Republican National Convention and virtual participants and observers throughout the world--stated that her opportunity to appear before the Convention was solely because of her skills as an individual and had nothing to do with her being perceived as a member of socially constructed groupings--viz., an ethnic and/or racial minority, an African American. Here, Dr. Rice is either being outright deceptive given the Republican purposefulness in "out-rainbowing" the Democrat's rainbow coalition or is demonstrating a remarkable lack of political insightfulness about the inevitable race and minority politics of US presidential campaigns.

Certainly, the first statement suggests that Dr. Rice is not above the political penchant--a penchant compatible with the contemporary approach to the national security advisor position. The second statement suggests that she may be compatible with the contemporary approach or that she may not. And assuming that she is impelled to exhibit the strong response set of the political animal, Dr. Rice may

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not be the appropriate candidate for the position, if it were to return to its origins. Moreover, assuming she is politically impelled but in an ineffectual manner, she may not be appropriate for the position in its current incarnation.

While some supporters might point to her academic leadership experience as an indicator for her positive functioning in the early conception of the advisor, others as well as many opponents and those that are neutral might return to an unfortunate aspect of racism within the US. Specifically, Dr. Rice will have to contend with explicit social constructions of her race and minority status that will affect perceptions of her competency and her motives. Some constructions may tend to reify her minority status, some to demonize it. Continuing in the political role of the heir apparent may be one way to defuse such constructions. Another might be to join the public debate in an easily accessible manner on the role of the national security advisor in a Republican administration should it be in the immediate future of the US. In either case, revisiting the National Security Act of 1947 might prove fruitful if maximizing good and minimizing evil on global, regional, and national contexts has something to do with the Act and the position. (See Alford, C.F. (1990). The organization of evil. *Political Psychology*, 11, 5-27; Bruni, F. (August 26, 2000). Bush vows to pay far greater heed to Latin America. *The New York Times*, pp. A1, A9; Grendstad, G., & Strand, T. (1999). Organizational types and leadership roles. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 15, 385-403; McSwite, O. C. (1997). Jacques Lacan and the theory of the human subject: How psychoanalysis can help public administration. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 41, 43-63; Preston, T., & Hart, P. (1999). Understanding and evaluating bureaucratic politics: The nexus between political leaders and advisory systems. *Political Psychology*, 20, 49-98; Zegart, A.B. (1999). *Flawed by design: The evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC*. Stanford University Press.) (Keywords: National Security Advisor, Rice.)