Executive power in both the US and UK has been steadily expanded in modern times. Growth in the number and influence of unelected personal advisers to has played a role in increasing the power of the President and Prime Minister. These advisors offer the chief executive an alternative source of policy to that of the cabinet, allowing them to circumnavigate expectations of collective government. As a result, the increased use of advisors allows a chief executive to become more of an autocrat.

History
Although not designed by the Constitution, the use of political advisors by the American President is now an established and accepted practice in the USA. The use of advisors has a long history in the Whitehouse, but in 1939 Roosevelt created the foundations of the modern EXOP when it was judges that “the President needs help”. The use of advisors for policymaking is a much more recent phenomenon in the UK. Under Thatcher, Think Tanks and special advisors in the Prime Ministers Office began to have a greater influence on policy. Indeed some Cabinet Ministers later complained that they found out about their Department’s policies in the morning newspapers! When Blair came to power, special advisors became a central source of government policy and the Prime Ministers Office was reorganised and expanded to around 250 staff, although this is still well short of the 1600 in the EXOP. Advisors such as Alistair Campbell were often considered to have more power than Cabinet Ministers, this lead to accusations that Blair was creating a presidential style of leadership.

Acceptability
In America, the use of advisors for steering the Executive Administration has become accepted practice, this is not the case in the UK were the use of advisors by the PM for policy-making continues to be somewhat controversial. The US executive’s mandate lies with the President as he alone is elected. As a result of this, there is no obligation toward collective decision making amongst his cabinet. Cabinet Secretaries in America are appointed as clear subordinates. While the President must be careful to avoid excessive Cabinet vs. EXOP rivalries, as well as creating undue ill-feeling in the Whitehouse by totally excluding Cabinet Secretaries from policy making, he is not required to seek whole Cabinet approval in the same way as the British PM. The idea that the PM is “primus inter pares” has been a gross understatement for some time. Nevertheless, the phrase remains in common usage as a reminder that the PM does not have a national mandate akin to that of the President. The PM leads the country by standing on the success of his party through their decision to have him as leader. As a result, attempts at autocratic rule by the PM through his advisors will swiftly upset party, Cabinet and public.

Influence over policy
Even though the influence of advisors in the UK has lead to accusations of a presidential Prime Minister, the reality is that the PM can never be truly presidential. Special Advisors in the UK have become more important in recent decades, but they will never dominate policymaking in the way the EXOP does. G.W. Bush was often portrayed as a dim-witted puppet struggling to communicate policies he didn’t really understand as directed by his Whitehouse Staff. Like all caricatures, much of this is fabrication but some is mere exaggeration of the truth that much of the second Bush administration’s policy was derived from the EXOP. Indeed Karl Rove was nicknamed “Bush’s Brain” because so much Oval Office policy originated in Rove’s office in the West Wing. Although Obama may be more capable of thinking for himself, there is still significant direction from his Special Advisor David Axelrod. It would be wrong to portray the US Cabinet as nothing more than nodding dogs but they are often the refiners rather than the initiators of policy. A comparison could be drawn here with the UK, for when Blair and Thatcher were at their strongest, Cabinet Meetings were little more than a rubber stamp of approval for policies designed by the PM with advisors or through bi-lateral meetings with relevant Ministers. However, as Thatcher and Blair discovered, such Prime Ministerial dominance cannot be sustained indefinitely. Thatcher’s downfall was triggered by Cabinet resignations from the likes Geoffrey Howe, who compared her to a cricket captain who broke the team bats before a match and a leadership challenge from the Defence Minster Michael Heseltine. Blair’s increasing unpopularity within his party following the invasion of Iraq resulted in his advisors influence waning as he was forced to respond to the views of dissenters within his cabinet and rebels within his party. Upon her
retirement Mo Mowlam criticised Blair’s use of advisors over Cabinet and described him as “presidential”. While US Cabinet Secretaries may occasionally grumble over the lack of influence compared to the EXOP they are not in a position to expect the level of esteem afforded to their British counterparts. Obama held policy meetings with his advisory on the day of his inauguration, but did not hold a full Cabinet meeting until three months into his presidency! Obama has appointed a host of new advisors who have been nicked-named czars by the media. He seems to use this group as his central forum for policy making, some commentators have begun to describe that czars as a “shadow cabinet” due to their influence in their respective areas of responsibility. These advisors, unlike cabinet appointees, do not need to be ratified by congress, they accountable to the President only.

Conclusion
West Wing advisors play a crucial role in a President’s administration. They are the primary influence decision-making with the Cabinet Secretaries often playing second fiddle. Although the importance of Prime Ministerial advisors has grown in the UK, they will never gain the level of influence of their US counterparts. The fusion of powers and parliamentary sovereignty will inevitably require a PM to garner guaranteed collective support at Cabinet and party level before being able to indulge in unilateral moves with his Policy Unit.
President Obama's czar system concerns some

He has 'super aides' for healthcare, the economy, energy and urban issues, with more to come -- prompting some lawmakers and groups to worry that he may be concentrating power and bypassing Congress.

WASHINGTON — As President Obama names more policy czars to his White House team -- high-level staff members who will help oversee the administration's top initiatives -- some lawmakers and Washington interest groups are raising concerns that he may be subverting the authority of Congress and concentrating too much power in the presidency.

The idea of these "super aides," who will work across agency lines to push the president's agenda, is not a new one. President Nixon may have named the first "czar" with his appointment of William E. Simon to handle the 1970s energy crisis. Other presidents have followed suit.

But none has embraced the concept, presidential scholars say, to the extent that Obama has. He has appointed special advisors who will work from inside the White House on healthcare, the economy, energy and urban issues, with more to come.

"The challenges coming at us are bigger than anything we've seen since the Depression," said Jim Messina, deputy White House chief of staff. "It's crucial to have people in these positions who can help us meet them head-on."

But some lawmakers and outside experts fear that Obama is setting up a system that is not subject to congressional oversight and creates the potential for conflict among his many advisors.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) became concerned enough to send a cautionary letter to Obama last week. At times, he said, past White House staffers have assumed duties that should be the responsibility of officials cleared through the Senate confirmation process. He cited President Bush's naming of homeland security czar Tom Ridge as an example.

"They rarely testify before congressional committees and often shield the information and decision-making process behind the assertion of executive privilege," Byrd wrote of past czars and White House staffers in similar positions. At times, he said, one outcome has been to "inhibit openness and transparency, and reduce accountability."

"The rapid and easy accumulation of power by White House staff can threaten the constitutional system of checks and balances," Byrd said.

It's far too early to tell whether Obama's quest for efficiency will lead to overstepping the bounds of presidential authority, but the latest appointment announcement could offer a few clues.