

# What if before the war, everyone came?

Goldwater-Nichols, contradicting policies, political appointees, and  
misalignment in American foreign policy

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank dozens of people for their help in explaining the finer points of foreign policy throughout my year at Brookings. Some have really stood out. I would like to thank former ambassadors Dick Jones, Steven Pifer, and Emil Skodon. Rear Admiral Sam Perez, Commander Tom Sheppard, Morgan Keay, and Jessica Tibbets from the State Department, provided valuable insight into how Defense and State work together. Brookings fellows Michael O'Hanlon and Elaine Kamarck were crucial in developing the way ahead and on Goldwater-Nichols reform, and finally Luke Farrell and Brendan Orino, whose tireless efforts in reviewing this paper took it from disparate comments and analysis to a coherent concept.

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# What if before the war, everyone came?

## Goldwater-Nichols, contradicting policies, political appointees, and misalignment in American foreign policy

ROBERT N. HEIN

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organizations routinely struggle and disagree when determining goals and how to achieve those goals. Families often disagree over whether to eat in or go out, and if they go out, where. Corporations struggle over whether to increase funding for marketing, research, or expansion. Likewise, governments struggle with issues such as foreign policy: Should the emphasis be on national security? Expanding the economy? Spreading democracy? Ensuring human rights? And what tools should be used to achieve those ends?

Formulation of foreign policy is a mega-industry. The arena's top stars, such as former secretaries of state Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell, earn \$50,000 per speech. Amazon.com currently lists 146,837 books on the subject. The top 10 foreign policy master's programs churn out over 5,000 new foreign policy master's degrees annually. So with so many experts and so much analysis and history to draw from, why is it so challenging?

Disagreements in United States national security policy are as old as the republic itself. The legendary disagreements between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson over the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 drove a wedge between the two old friends. Not surprisingly, disagreements within the highest levels of government still exist today, exemplified by President Obama's and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's divergent views on arming Syrian rebels.<sup>1</sup>

While America relies on the president to put forth a vision and allows the president to staff his cabinet with like-minded persons, the number of officials involved in foreign policy just in the government reaches into the thousands. However, even those philosophically like-minded executives can disagree. Those directly tasked in the execution of foreign policy, such as ambassadors, generals, and admirals, often feel they are on the front lines and may bemoan meddling from Washington, while those back in D.C. are often concerned about field leaders not getting the "big picture."

There are other forces at work as well. The government wields the four main instruments of power: diplomacy, information, military, and economic (DIME). Since the early 1990s, the United States has arguably favored military power over all others. The increase in the power of combatant commanders and shrinking budgets within the State Department has caused a shift toward the military away from diplomatic, information, and economic tools. Legislation, such as the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 may have unwittingly tipped the scales toward the use of military power.

Without the full DIME, the U.S. has shortchanged itself in the development and execution of its foreign policy. Much of the analysis of how to bring whole-of-government power to bear recommends adding layers of bureaucracy or requires large amounts of financing, neither of which is particularly viable in today's legislative environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Debenedetti, "Clinton recalls foreign policy disagreements with Obama in book: report," Reuters, June 5, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/05/us-usa-politics-clinton-foreign-policy-idUSKBN0EG2Z520140605>.

So what can be done? There are simple steps that can be taken by the Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of State (DOS) to better align policy development and execution.

- Expand the use of representatives from the State Department's Conflict Stability Office to the combatant commanders. This model is currently used at United States Africa Command with success.
- Expand the use of foreign policy advisors (POLADs) at the combatant commands (COCOMs). Rather than solely serving in an advisory capacity, their responsibilities should expand to include those of assistant deputy regional secretaries.
- Align how DOS and DOD divide up the geographic regions of the world.
- Continue to enhance training of State Department members in areas where they can meet with and work with other members of the government from different departments.

Streamlining the foreign policy process is also its own industry. There is no shortage of think tanks, journalists, and assorted policy entrepreneurs ready to offer up solutions, but often those solutions come with large price tags or wholesale realignments that would require massive legislation. This paper attempts to examine the problem, identify where and why schisms within the government occur, and offer simple solutions to better align foreign policy development and execution that could be implemented in an environment that is both fiscally constrained and legislatively challenging.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CURRENT ALIGNMENT

### *The diminished role of the State Department*

"The attitude that presidents and secretaries may come and go but the [state] department goes on forever has led many presidents to distrust and dislike the Department of State."—Dean Acheson, "Present at Creation"

"If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition ultimately."—General James Mattis, testimony to Congress, March 2013

The Defense Department is often accused of militarizing foreign policy, and an argument can certainly be made to that effect, but there is another reality: power, like nature, abhors a vacuum. In 2012, one foreign policy analyst argued that it was not an overambitious military that was responsible for this trend; rather, it was under-resourced civilian agencies.

The militarization of American foreign policy does not reflect the ambition by the military; it reflects the vacuum left by inadequate civilian power...The most recent example would be the governance issues in Afghanistan: small unit military leaders, rather than diplomats, are working to create local councils throughout the country. The military command has established a high-level anti-corruption task force and is setting up legal and judicial structures—both functions that ought to be civilian activities. Despite the existence of an embassy of over a thousand civilians in Kabul, those tasks have not been undertaken by civilians.

The inability of State to improve is not for lack of ideas or effort at the highest echelons of the department. Typically, secretaries of state invest little in the professionalization of the department. Instead, they spend all their time on policies rather than the functioning of the institution.<sup>2</sup>

It is the focus on policy and not execution that creates the problem. In his book on the preparations for the invasion of Iraq, Bob Woodward describes a conversation between Secretary of State Colin Powell and President Bush, "You are going to be the proud owner of 25 million people, you will own all of their hopes aspirations and problems, and you'll own it all." Privately, Powell and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage called this the Pottery Barn Rule, "You break it, you own it."<sup>3</sup> The secretary was certainly focused on whether or not the United States should invade. Yet once that decision was made, the State Department either would not or could not provide the necessary civilian leadership in Iraq and Afghanistan to execute American policy, leaving many of those tasks to the military.

In his memoir "Known and Unknown," former Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld lays out the problem from his perspective.

It was disturbing that we were spending billions of dollars to provide security, but we could not properly staff the U.S. embassy with the needed civilian advisers...The reality was that all three—security, di-

2 Kori N. Schake, *State of disrepair: fixing the culture and practices of the State Department* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2012), pp. 6-7.

3 Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2004), chapter 13.



plomacy, and the economy—had to be closely linked. If progress was hampered in one, the others would be hindered...we knew that while our military would not lose a battle, it was also true that we could not win strategic success by military means alone.<sup>4</sup>

So, why does the State Department have difficulty executing policy? In April of 2015, the American Academy of Diplomacy (a group composed of former ambassadors, secretaries, military combatant commanders, and former senior State Department personnel) provided their assessment of the State Department: “America’s diplomatic ability to lead globally is declining...State is neither educating its staff to the professional level of our allies and competitors, nor systemically preparing its future bench to assume senior rolls.”<sup>5</sup> The report, in addition to calling out shortfalls in education, notes perceived levels of politicization. “The sale of office is contrary to law. That it appears to be happening is an embarrassment to the country and adds nothing to either the prestige or the quality of American diplomacy.”<sup>6</sup>

The report from the Academy also highlights the erosion of Foreign Service advancement, noting that from 1975 to 2013 the number of career foreign service officers in senior positions—assistant secretary and above—has declined from over 60 percent to between 25 and 30 percent. Additionally, more than 45 diplomatic functions are headed by individuals titled special envoy, ambassador-at-large, representative, or coordinator. This politicization of the State Department comes at a heavy cost to experience in both the field and D.C., and is a blow to the morale of those who have dedicated their lives to the Foreign Service.

### ***The growth of power within the Department of Defense***

The Department of Defense did not even exist prior to World War II. Before 1958, the Department of the Navy and the Department of War were separate entities within the executive branch. The inability of the departments to work together due to differences in service cultures and protection of internal budgets was evidenced by their lack of agreement over simple organizational structure in the Pacific in WWII. As a result, General Douglas MacArthur was given command of all ground forces, and

Admiral Chester Nimitz commanded all naval forces in the Pacific. (Today there is a single unified commander in the Pacific, with four-star Navy, Air Force, and Army components underneath him.) After WWII, the services exacerbated the discord by independently procuring and incorporating new technologies such as complex communications systems, hindering their ability to communicate with each other. The ensuing decades did little to lessen the rivalries inside the Department of Defense.

During the war in Vietnam, inter-service rivalry manifested itself once again. In his study on air power in Vietnam, Ian Horwood noted,

The interservice debate between the Army and Air Force over roles and missions became so bitter and so visible in South Vietnam that the service chiefs sought compromise so the dispute did not spiral out of control with consequent serious damage for both services’ aviation programs and budgets. Early attempts to reach such a compromise reached only limited success because the doctrinal differences between the two services meant that they were trying to solve their problems without a common language. Indeed the Army and the Air Force never resolved their basic doctrinal differences during the Vietnam period.<sup>7</sup>

Alas, the internecine rivalry in Vietnam did nothing to curb the problem.

In “America’s Viceroy: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy,” Derek Reveron highlights how the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt in April of 1980 shined a spotlight on the problems within the Department of Defense.

What were the underlying problems? No existing joint organization was capable of conducting such a raid. There was no useful contingency plan, no planning staff with the required expertise, no joint doctrine or procedures, and no relevant cross-service experience. The joint task force commander, Major General James Vaught, an Army Ranger, was a distinguished combat veteran, but he had no experience in operations with other services. The participating service units trained separately; they met for the first time in the desert in Iran, at Desert One. Even there, they did not establish command and control procedures or clear lines of authority. Colonel James Kyle, U.S. Air Force, who was the senior command-

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4 Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown* (New York: Sentinel, 2011), pp. 690-691.

5 “American Diplomacy at Risk,” American Academy of Diplomacy, April 2015, [http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/ADAR\\_Full\\_Report\\_4.1.15.pdf](http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/ADAR_Full_Report_4.1.15.pdf), p. 9.

6 “American Diplomacy at Risk,” p. 11.

7 Ian Horwood, *Interservice Rivalry and Airpower in the Vietnam War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), p. 120.

er at Desert One, would recall that there were “four commanders at the scene without visible identification, incompatible radios, and no agreed-upon plan, not even a designated location for the commander.” How could this state of affairs have possibly arisen? It happened because the services were so separate and so determined to remain separate.<sup>8</sup>

As the nation matured, its military organization did not. Service biases stretching back centuries hardened the service chiefs’ views and caused them to dig in their heels on matters of procurement, planning, and operations. On February 3, 1982, about two years after Desert One, even after all the lessons learned and observed, the military would not reform. Finally in exasperation, General David Jones, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, appeared to a joint session of Congress and behind closed doors voiced his deep concerns, “The system is broken. I have tried to reform it from the inside, but I cannot. Congress is going to have to mandate necessary reforms.” He thus provided the catalyst for the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reform Act of 1986.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, Congress’ task was not an easy one. Twenty months after General Jones appealed to Congress, the bill had passed the democratically controlled House but was opposed by both the Joint Chiefs and the Republican-controlled Senate. It took another organizational debacle to force the bill through: the invasion of Grenada. What should have been a relatively quick victory was plagued by problems:

Four Navy SEALs drowned at the start of a pre-invasion reconnaissance mission after an air drop from an Air Force transport plane. As the invasion proceeded, Army combat units found that they couldn’t talk to Navy support ships offshore because their radios weren’t compatible. Navy bureaucrats objected to refueling Army helicopters when they unexpectedly landed on their ships. A Marine officer balked at flying Army Rangers into battle on Marine helicopters. Another Marine officer was so concerned by his lack of coordination with nearby Army paratroopers that he later told an official military historian that he was more afraid of being shot at by the 82nd Airborne than he was of the Grenadian Army. On the third day of fighting, an errant air strike by a Navy jet wounded 17 Army Rangers, one of whom later died.<sup>10</sup>

The service chiefs could no longer speak credibly on blocking defense reform. However, it still took three more years for Goldwater-Nichols to become law.

### ***Pivotal legislation: The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986***

Goldwater-Nichols had strong intended consequences, namely ensuring that the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force would plan and operate together to prevent mishaps like those in the aforementioned incidents. It was successful in its goal to strengthen the role of the chairman and define new and specific authorities to the combatant commanders, specifically placing them directly under the secretary of defense in the chain of command. The Act further outlined the responsibilities of those commanders, giving them total authority to accomplish assigned missions within their geographic areas of responsibility. The success of the law in allowing combatant commands (COCOMs) the authority to respond to natural disasters quickly or to work directly with the secretary of defense is beyond question.

Of course, there are always unintended consequences. Arguably, the services assumed less charge of global strategy and were instead given the responsibility to man, train, and equip their respective services. Some of those responsible for the new law have lamented this change of focus. In a letter to the chief of naval operations in July 2014, Rep. Randy Forbes, chairman of the House Seapower & Projection Forces Subcommittee, noted his concern about the lack of global views on current issues. “[Jointness] has brought great benefit to many areas, but I fear that it has reduced the perceived position of Chief of Naval Operations to the Navy’s head programmer and budget-maker, rather than the nation’s foremost expert and advocate on the nexus between Seapower and National Power.”<sup>11</sup>

To his credit, the Chief of Naval Operations responded to congressman Forbes’ concern and issued a maritime strategy in March of 2015. Unfortunately, the document focused on preparing for a 21st century naval force and

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8 James R. Locher III, “Has it worked? The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act,” *Naval War College Review* LIV, no. 4 (Autumn 2001), <https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/744b0f7d-4a3f-4473-8a27-c5b444c2ea27/Has-It-Worked--The-Goldwater-Nichols-Reorganizatio>, p. 100.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

10 Phil Kukielski, “How Grenada reshaped the US military,” *The Boston Globe*, September 8, 2013, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2013/09/08/how-grenada-reshaped-military/IZDvWwlt9Ed1chAJufkrvj/story.html>.

11 “Document: July Letter from Rep. Randy Forbes to CNO Adm. Jonathan Greenert on ‘Deficit of Strategic Thinking,’” *USNI News*, October 1, 2014, <http://news.usni.org/2014/10/01/document-july-letter-rep-randy-forbes-cno-adm-jonathan-greenert-deficit-strategic-thinking>.

did not have the level of specificity that many in the national security field desired. Although promised classified annexes may alleviate that concern, it is unlikely that they will address all elements of national power or the global shaping operations needed to prepare for future crisis. This is not to say the Navy is not willing or that it lacks the capacity, rather it is an issue of authorities and bureaucracy that will prevent that important step.

The role of the geographic combatant commanders (of which there are now six), has expanded dramatically. With the implementation of Goldwater-Nichols, they were made accountable directly to the secretary of defense and given tremendous latitude in their areas of responsibility. This new power base created a major player in the policy arena far outside the beltway. Further exacerbating the problem, in the decade following the enactment of Goldwater-Nichols the operations budget for the State Department declined. While the military expanded overseas, the size and thus the effectiveness of overseas embassies decreased, “Washington came to rely ever more on the regional CinCs [combatant commanders-in-chief] to fill a diplomatic void.”<sup>12</sup>

### ***Alignment today***

So who creates foreign policy for the United States today? Certainly the president and national security advisor, but also the Department of State, with legions of Foreign Service officers and embassies in every nation around the globe plus career Foreign Affairs officers in D.C., are the major day-to-day players. However, as we have seen, the Department of Defense plays a significant role: the combatant commanders, described by some as modern proconsuls<sup>13</sup> or viceroys,<sup>14</sup> have played an ever increasing role since the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.

While the role of the individual branches of the military has arguably diminished since the passage of Goldwater-Nichols, the military services still influence foreign policy development. The Departments of Defense and State still hammer out foreign policy, and the services, through the budgetary process, can affect the execution of foreign policy. Decisions to expand or contract foreign bases, purchase aircraft carriers or hospital ships,

and determine the size of forces permanently deployed overseas, lend credence to the phrase, “If you want to know our policy, look at our budget,” a common refrain among service planners. Highlighting the effects of the budgets on strategy and the role played by the services, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter advised Congress recently that continuing cuts to U.S. defense spending were causing “corrosive damage to our national security,” and he urged them to back the president’s request for a big boost in military funding in 2016. At current funding levels, Secretary Carter reiterated that the services would be unable to execute the president’s strategy as written, further muddling the decision making process.

During major global events affecting U.S. interests, departmental secretaries, the National Security Council, and the president all become involved in addressing the crises. Wars, natural disasters, pandemics, genocide, and nuclear proliferation all provide a nexus around which elements of national power converge. But what of the issues brewing well below the surface? What of those day-to-day activities that do not rise to the level of presidential importance: the street demonstrations, arms sales, reassurance of allies and trade partners? These are issues that ambassadors, COCOMs, and the services deal with every day. Peacetime shaping operations, or in military parlance “phase zero” operations, are those routine issues that shape the next crisis, determine who our allies are, influence foreign governments, determine future trade agreements, and open the way for U.S. markets.

While overarching policy created in Washington, D.C. offers good guidance most of the time, the constantly changing global environment requires a more nimble and integrated approach. Attempts to disassociate policy development from execution are not feasible. Gone are the days when militaries were given broad orders, like during the Battle of Manila Bay, when Admiral George Dewey was told to “Commence operations, particularly against the Spanish Fleet. You must capture vessels or destroy. Use utmost endeavors.”<sup>15</sup> Rather, policy development and execution have grown increasingly intertwined as American politics has evolved.

During peacetime operations it is even more important that the players operate with the same objectives. When

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12 Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace With America’s Military Priestly* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 2003), p. 45.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 61-77.

14 Derek Reveron, *America’s Viceroys: The Military and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

15 Michael Golay, *The Spanish-American War* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), p. 33.

crisis starts to blossom, it is the foundations laid during times of peace that will carry over and matter most.

## ALIGNMENT IN PRACTICE

The perceived dichotomy between the Departments of Defense and State is born of different views of the world, the role of the military, and the personalities of those in power. A headline from the New York Times on December 11, 1984 highlighted just how far apart secretaries of state and defense can be on particular policies: “Shultz-Weinberger discord seen in nearly all foreign policy issues.”<sup>16</sup> The dichotomy between the departments is not unique to either party, as evidenced by a now famous quote from then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to General Colin Powell in 2003, “What’s the point of having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?”<sup>17</sup>

### *Sometimes we can get it right*

The Departments of State and Defense really can be good partners, as seen prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom when the U.S. ambassador to Kuwait, Richard Jones, brought together a political/military (pol/mil) working group. Composed of members from his embassy and heads of local U.S. military components, the group worked on preparatory tasks required by the Departments of State and Defense, such as establishing a temporary port in Kuwait for the movement of ammunition and the construction of a jet fuel pipeline to airfields where the U.S. was operating.

During one of the pol/mil discussions, a military member made the suggestion that it would be great if Kuwait would donate the fuel it supplied to the pipeline. This observation reminded Ambassador Jones of an earlier discussion with the Kuwaiti minister of defense, during which the minister had asked, “What do you want us to do?” In response, Jones had reiterated that the U.S. was seeking a Kuwaiti green light for the preparatory tasks. The minister had replied, “No, what do you want ‘us’ to do?” Knowing the logistical challenges the military would face and the enormous requirements for possible

upcoming operations, Ambassador Jones subsequently decided to broach the request with the Kuwaiti foreign minister on his own authority as the president’s representative, convinced that it was certainly in line with the needs articulated by DOD and DOS. In the end, Kuwait provided all fuel to the U.S. free of charge throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom for more than a year. This is a great example of how an experienced Foreign Service officer in the field, working closely with the military, was able to greatly advance U.S. interests without lengthy deliberation back in D.C.

### *Where we have had trouble*

- The United States Navy’s Fifth Fleet is based out of the small island kingdom of Bahrain, a constitutional monarchy in the Arabian Gulf that has hosted approximately 2,300 service men and women continuously since its independence from Britain in 1971. During the Middle Eastern uprisings of 2011, commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, the Shia majority protested against the government of Bahrain. According to the deputy assistant secretary for Near East Affairs at the time, the State Department’s policy was

...to provide training and assistance on a nonpartisan basis to political parties, political candidates, campaign managers, who want to learn how they can be more effective in the electoral process. But we provide that assistance in a nonpartisan way through NGOs that open their programs to all parties that reject violence and embrace the democratic process. That’s our policy. We are very interested in promoting a quality democratic process. We are not pushing for a particular outcome.<sup>18</sup>

At one point, however, State Department employees brought donuts to the protestors, a potentially partisan act. In fact, one of the protestors, Sheikh Mohammed Hassan, was quoted as saying, “These sweets are a good gesture, but we hope it is translated into practical actions.”<sup>19</sup> Bahraini journalists went so far as to accuse the U.S. of colluding with Shia Iran to bring Bahrain into the Iranian sphere of influence.

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16 Hendrick Smith, “Shultz-Weinberger discord seen in nearly all foreign policy issues,” The New York Times, December 11, 1984, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/11/world/shultz-weinberger-discord-seen-in-nearly-all-foreign-policy-issues.html>.

17 Michael Dobbs, “With Albright, Clinton Accepts New U.S. Role,” The Washington Post, December 8, 1996, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/govt/admin/stories/albright120896.htm>.

18 Tamara C. Wittes, interview by Holly Jensen, “State Department Live: Arab Spring,” United States Department of State, November 1, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/177190.htm>.

19 Yousif Albinkhalil, *America and Bahrain Winter* (Xlibris LLC, 2013), e-book, pp. 72-73.



- In another incident following the attacks of 9/11, the U.S. sought to establish bases around Afghanistan. Uzbekistan, situated just to Afghanistan's north, appeared a clear strategic partner and the perfect place from which to launch search and rescue operations and stage supplies. Ultimately, the U.S. flew missions from the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) airbase for over three years. But on July 29, 2005, a courier from the Uzbek foreign ministry delivered an eviction notice to the U.S. embassy. What drove this eviction? Under Secretary of State R. Nicholas Burns was scheduled to arrive in Uzbekistan four days later, to pressure the Uzbek government to allow an international investigation into suspected human rights abuses.
- In August of 2014, the State Department was attempting to establish a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza. Under previously approved guidelines, DOD was simultaneously providing weapons, such as tank ammunition, to Israel. The inflexibility of American policy could not rapidly adapt to new circumstances in a crisis. Thus it appeared to the Palestinians that the U.S. was heavily favoring Israel. While no rules were broken, conflicting policies made the ceasefire a much more difficult problem to manage.<sup>20</sup>
- In April of 1988, the Department of Defense was openly critical of State Department suggestions to use the military to oust Manuel Noriega in Panama. DOD was concerned about the potential loss of American lives, while the State Department strongly advocated the deployment of thousands of additional troops.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, the U.S. adopted the approach advocated by the State Department, an approach which proved successful.

When considering these events, essential questions arise regarding the alignment between the military and diplomatic elements shaping foreign policy:

- Where was the alignment between departments on policy?
- How does the U.S. balance its respect for human rights with national security?
- Why can't departments communicate quickly and

effectively?

- When should military power be used? Who decides?

### *The future of current policies*

The current lack of clear answers to the above questions leaves a gap in policy formulation and implementation that could exacerbate future crises. It is interesting to note how alignment between diplomacy and national security components evolve based on the maturity or age of the potential conflict and necessity for clear policy. NATO is a great example of a mature alignment born of necessity. Procedures are in place to ensure that actions undertaken by the military are fully vetted by the diplomatic and national leadership of every member state. Whether you agree with NATO's decisions, you can be assured that those decisions are aligned both diplomatically and militarily. Similarly, DOS and DOD have a fairly mature and aligned stance on Iran and have worked closely together to define any future actions.

But there are also obvious parts of the world that have a strong potential for misalignment:

- The Arctic. The U.S. recently took over chairmanship of the Arctic Council, an international body made up of Arctic states to address issues such as environmental protection and disaster response. The council specifically avoids security and military issues. The lack of discussion of military issues has not been controversial to date; however, decreasing polar ice portends an increase in maritime traffic and increased development of natural resources. Russia is in the process of opening ten Arctic search-and-rescue stations, 16 deep-water ports, 13 airfields, and 10 air-defense radar stations across its Arctic periphery. So before a crisis erupts, now is the time to ensure aligned policies within the government.
- China. While the American and Chinese economies are thoroughly intertwined, Chinese reclamation of islands in the South China Sea and perceived bullying of its neighbors such as Vietnam and the Philippines are heating up to a possible flash point. The recent policy rebalance to the Pacific has confused many allies and non-allies alike. Some in the Pacific view the rebalance as military in nature, and recent

<sup>20</sup> Adam Entous, "Gaza Crisis: Israel Outflanks the White House on Strategy," The Wall Street Journal, August 14, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-sway-over-israel-on-gaza-at-a-low-1407979365>.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Pear, "Split is reported in administration on Panama policy," The New York Times, April 3, 1988, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/03/world/split-is-reported-in-administration-on-panama-policy.html>.

U.S. reaction to the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank and an increased number of ships forward deployed to the Far East have reinforced this view. The U.S. needs to determine where it sees China in the future and work toward that goal. Granted, that plan will undoubtedly be modified in the coming years, but Asia is an area where whole-of-government power must be aligned or else departments with the best of intentions will unwittingly work against each other.

With the potential for miscalculation high and the costs so damaging, why isn't more being done to fix the problem? The simple answer is that it's a hard problem. The tens of thousands of books written on the topic, often by brilliant scholars, frequently contradict each other. Departments within the government often protect their own turf in attempts to demonstrate why they are indispensable in the face of budget cuts. Many of the recommendations from academic studies simply cost too much or are too difficult to implement legislatively, for example some of the recommendations that came out of a Center for Strategic and International Studies report "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols," which called for new planning offices in the Departments of Treasury, Commerce and Justice; a new agency for interagency and coalition operations; and, like most studies involving military efficiency, calls for acquisition reform. Any realistic progress must start with a clear foreign policy agenda, with achievable goals based on national interest.

## FRAMING FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

"Human rights is the soul of our foreign policy. And I say this with assurance, because human rights is the soul of our sense of nationhood."—Jimmy Carter, 30th Anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 6, 1978

### *Where do our national interests lie?*

Determining and agreeing on true national interests is just as fundamental a problem as acting on them. Before we can get the various departments to work together, we must agree on common goals, and those goals are set forth by the president in his National Security Strategy (NSS).<sup>22</sup>

- The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners;
- A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity;
- Respect for universal values at home and around the world; and
- An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.

If viewed as a prioritized list, then the items are executable, which allows departments to prioritize. It is when the goals are viewed as co-equal that problems arise.

The promotion of universal values (defined in the NSS as advancing equality, supporting emerging democracies, empowering civil society and young leaders, and prevention of mass atrocities) and the spread of democratization takes a considerable amount of capital, both human and financial. Ensuring a values-based world is certainly a worthwhile goal, and there are times when the country cannot ignore overseas atrocities, but the pursuit of a human rights/democratization agenda may in fact undermine other foreign policy objectives. What is even more confusing to the rest of the world are perceived inconsistencies.

A case can certainly be made that the U.S. pushes human rights, liberalization, and democratization issues when it is in its interests to do so, but promoting these can also backfire. Despite the support offered by the U.S. during the recent Arab Spring, four years later the only country with resultant democratic governance is Tunisia. In 1979, Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick critiqued the Carter administration's overreliance on democratization in guiding its foreign policy: "The American effort to impose liberalization and democratization on a government confronted with violent internal opposition not only failed, but actually assisted the coming to power of new regimes in which ordinary people enjoy fewer freedoms and less personal security than under the previous autocracy—regimes, moreover, hostile to American interests and policies."<sup>23</sup> Ambassador Kirkpatrick's take on this foreign policy approach has echoes in recent attempts to promote democracy in Egypt, which led to a

22 White House, National Security Strategy, February 2015, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015\\_national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf).

23 Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," Commentary (November 1979).

coup-like event in 2013.

When Henry Kissinger was sworn in as secretary of state, he was very clear on his views of the integration of human rights issues into American foreign policy, “I believe it is dangerous for us to make the domestic policy of countries around the world a direct objective of U.S. foreign policy.” Human rights considerations, he argued, would damage bilateral relations with U.S. allies and friends.<sup>24</sup> It is especially notable that more than 40 years after leaving office, Kissinger is viewed by many as the most effective secretary of state of the last 50 years, perhaps highlighting that while promoting human rights is a laudable goal, national security must remain the main focus.<sup>25</sup>

The temptation for policy makers to improve the world is a strong one; over time, however, they can develop a more realist view. In his annual address to the United Nations in September 2013, President Obama acknowledged that while “America cares about democracy, human rights and free trade, we can rarely achieve these objectives through unilateral American action.” This was quite a turnaround from his speech two years earlier when he said that the United States would champion universal human rights and political reform and not as a secondary interest.<sup>26</sup>

The encouragement of universal values is a worthwhile goal, but it should not define American foreign policy at the expense of national security.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Revise Goldwater-Nichols*

While Goldwater-Nichols has been very effective in aligning the services to plan and operate as a joint force, there are portions of the law regarding policy alignment that could be improved. Previous examinations of Goldwater-Nichols recommended significant mod-

ifications to current bureaucracy or adding additional layers. Wholesale reorganization or major realignments and changes to budgets require years of study and deliberation prior to approval, thus making many of those recommendations dead on arrival.

In 2014, under the direction of former national security advisor and combatant commander James Jones, the Atlantic Council published a comprehensive study on how to better balance the interagency for global engagement.<sup>27</sup> The study proposed the establishment of unified State and Defense Departments at the regional level for execution of the National Security Strategy. While an interesting idea that has potential in a peacetime environment, it runs the risk of moving too many resources into peacetime activities. This would arguably improve lives during peacetime, but when preparing for war footing those preparations would be extremely challenging. The training and infrastructure necessary for the conduct of war would not be available. As an interim step they recommended collocating assistant secretaries for regions with the COCOMs. This is also not practical or feasible as Washington is where the big policy decisions are made, and regional secretaries must stay plugged into the Congress, the White House, and the National Security Council to monitor the pulse of current debates. There is a better solution.

### *Political advisors*

Currently, each service and combatant commander has a political advisor, or POLAD, assigned. According to the Department of State, the POLAD acts as “personal advisors to leading U.S. military leaders/commanders to provide policy support regarding the diplomatic and political aspects of the commanders’ military responsibilities.”<sup>28</sup> The POLADS are senior Foreign Service officers who have served successful tours as ambassadors and are at the top of their profession. They serve as critical policy advisors to four-star admirals and generals around the globe. Of course, their responsibilities and influence

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24 Roberta Cohen, “Integrating Human rights in US Foreign Policy: The History, the Challenges, and the Criteria for an Effective Policy,” speech given at Foreign Service Institute, Washington, DC, April 2008, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/speeches/2008/4/human-rights-cohen/04\\_human\\_rights\\_cohen.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/speeches/2008/4/human-rights-cohen/04_human_rights_cohen.pdf).

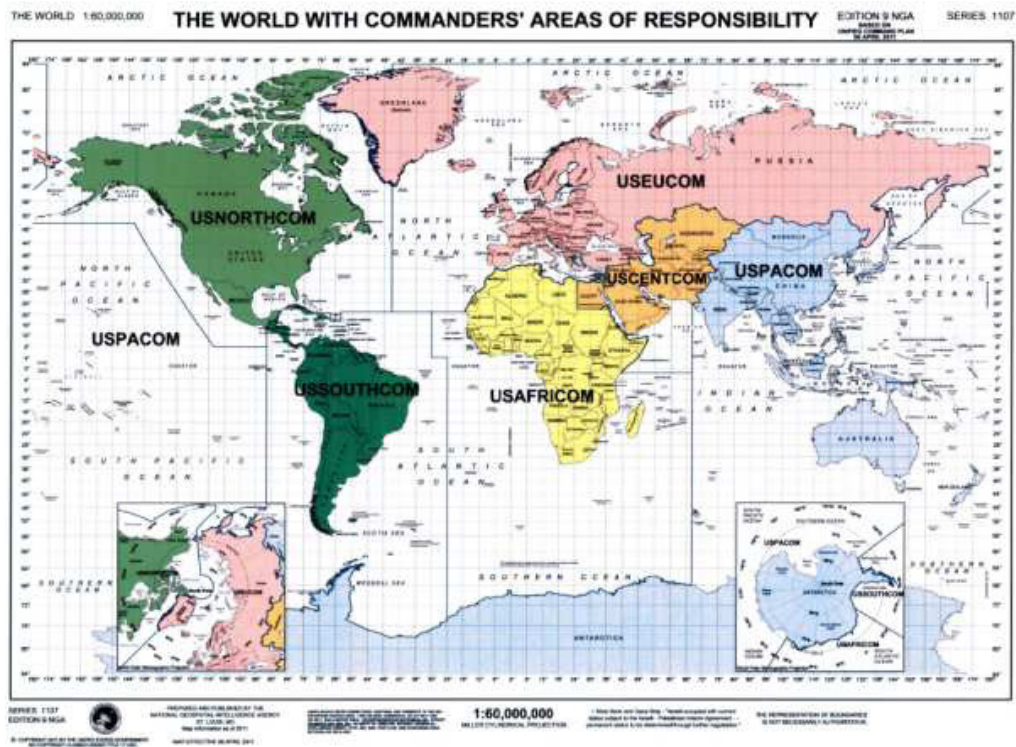
25 Daniel Maliniak, Susan Peterson, Ryan Powers, et al., “U.S. scholars rank the top 25 IR programs for undergraduates, master’s, and Ph.D.s,” *Foreign Policy*, February 2, 2015, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/03/top-twenty-five-schools-international-relations/>.

26 Fred Hiatt, “Fred Hiatt: Obama’s U-turn on human rights,” *The Washington Post*, October 20, 2013, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fred-hiatt-obamas-u-turn-on-human-rights/2013/10/20/7040e52c-3807-11e3-80c6-7e6dd8d22d8f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fred-hiatt-obamas-u-turn-on-human-rights/2013/10/20/7040e52c-3807-11e3-80c6-7e6dd8d22d8f_story.html).

27 “All Elements of National Power: Moving Toward a New Interagency Balance for US Global Engagement,” Atlantic Council, July 2014, [http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/All\\_Elements\\_of\\_National\\_Power.pdf](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/All_Elements_of_National_Power.pdf).

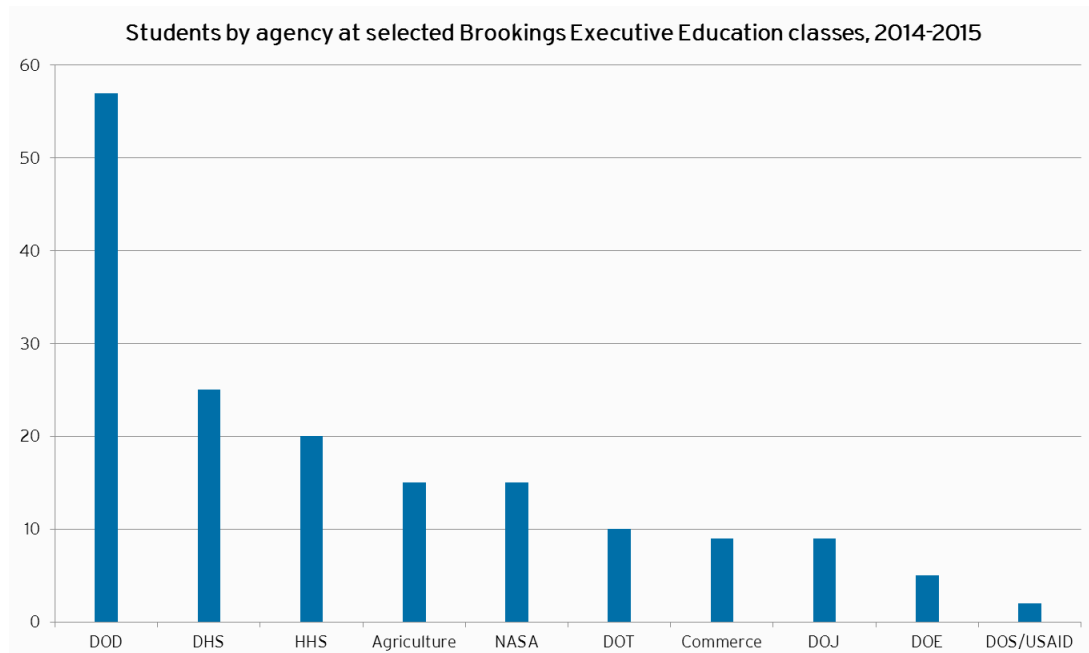
28 “State Foreign Policy Advisors (POLADs) to U.S. and NATO Military Commanders,” United States Department of State, <http://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/polad/>.

Figure 1



Recommended global alignment<sup>29</sup>

Figure 2



<sup>29</sup> Andrew Feickert, "The Unified Command Plan and Combatant Commands: Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service, January 3, 2013, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42077.pdf>.



are defined by the senior officer to whom they are assigned. Their reach back to the Department of State is based on relationships they have built up through their careers, as there is no official connection back to any specific division within the State Department nor is their accountability to the Department of State.

This is an underutilized and potentially misaligned resource, but by enhancing the role of the POLAD, DOS and DOD would achieve an alignment to potentially resolve many issues before they become problems. If the POLAD were dual-hatted as a deputy assistant regional secretary assigned to the COCOM with the assistant secretaries remaining in D.C., this could be a viable and effective compromise. The restructuring of the POLAD position would be beneficial to both State and Defense as it would provide legitimate reach back to the State Department. It would also provide State an active voice in defense policy debates and would provide the COCOM the reach back to all elements of government power.

On March 26, 2015, Senator John McCain addressed the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Aside from personnel issues that may be creating bloat among senior staffs, one issue he raised has major policy implications outside of DOD. “Are the roles and missions of the Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, Joint Task Forces, and other headquarters elements properly aligned to conduct strategic planning, equip our warfighters and maximize combat power?”<sup>30</sup> It is a good assumption that Senator McCain believes the answer is “no.”

It was no coincidence that the senator chose this venue to lay out his plans—CSIS conducted a comprehensive review of Goldwater-Nichols in 2004, which was followed by a four phase report that examined institutional, interagency, personnel, and acquisition reform.<sup>31</sup> So why reexamine the subject if CSIS had conducted such a thorough review with the leading experts in the field? A common refrain echoed repeatedly in interviews with State Department personnel is that policy is made in D.C., and the farther you are from Washington the harder it is to effect policy. As a result, any recommendations regarding placing senior policy officials “in the field” will be met with limited acceptance. Likewise, the creation of additional staffs or additional layers of bu-

reaucracy, such as an NSC directorate for complex contingency operations or crisis planning teams, are really just workarounds that cover jobs that should be executed by currently sitting government executives.

### ***Geographically align the Departments of Defense and State***

The recommendation to geographically align the world between departments comes up frequently in examinations of Goldwater-Nichols. The uniformed side of the military divides the world into six areas of responsibility, each served by a four-star admiral or general. Those areas are Pacific Command, Northern Command, Africa Command, European Command, Central Command, and Southern Command. The geographic lines separating these commands are periodically reviewed and disseminated in a document called the Unified Command Plan.

The State Department also divides the world among six assistant secretaries, however their divisions include Africa, Europe and Eurasia, East Asia and Pacific, Near East, South and Central Asia, and Western Hemisphere. With these differences in alignment and focus, there is little doubt that confusion and misaligned policies will ensue. Of note, the civilian side of the Department of Defense is not aligned with either DOS or the military. Instead, DOD has three assistant secretaries for Asia and the Pacific, the Homeland, and International Security Affairs.

The model used by the uniformed side of DOD is the best model currently, as there is no geographic overlap. And while there are potential seams, such as India and Pakistan, and Israel and the Middle East, potential conflicts in those areas could be handled by giving temporary authority over to a geographic hot spot command for the duration of that conflict, as is currently practiced by DOD. The map would certainly still have to undergo periodic reviews to take into account shifting alliances and borders (See Figure 1).

### ***DOS regional security offices***

The current model in the United States Africa Command places a State Department expert from the Con-

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30 Colin Clark, “McCain Launches Goldwater-Nichols Review; How Far Will He Go?” Breaking Defense, March 26, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/03/mccain-launches-goldwater-nichols-review-how-far-will-he-go/>.

31 Clark A. Murdock, Michele A. Flournoy, Christopher A. Williams, et al., “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols Phase I Report,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2004, [http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/bgn\\_ph1\\_report.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/bgn_ph1_report.pdf).

flict Stability Office (CSO) as a conflict advisor to the commander. This position, unique to this command, is a well thought-out and executed example of how to better align the two departments. The role of the advisor is to:

- Participate in cross-functional, multidisciplinary joint and operational planning teams that contribute to the development of Department of Defense plans and orders.
- Support AFRICOM Component Commands, Joint Task Forces, and other forces in theater with conflict and stabilization planning expertise.
- Facilitate civil-military integration by contributing to a whole-of-government perspective within AFRICOM operational efforts across the conflict spectrum. In consultation with AFRICOM staff, the CSO representative will also be charged with making recommendations, as needed, on the most effective position within the Command to leverage CSO expertise in support of AFRICOM.
- Help identify existing or future AFRICOM planning activities that may be enhanced by additional CSO resources or civilian interagency assets and support their integration into the planning process.<sup>32</sup>

Creating similar positions in the COCOMs would benefit both by allowing the COCOM to have improved access to DOS expertise and allowing DOS earlier access into the planning process.

### ***Focus on training***

In its most recent Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, the State Department acknowledged that it has begun a significant overhaul in its approach to training. However, there is still work to be done. State needs a better professional education program. One issue raised by a former ambassador was a now-cancelled training program called the Senior Seminar, a superb training program designed to:

- Enhance their executive skills and more fully realize their leadership potential in preparation for service in demanding, senior positions;
- Gain a deeper appreciation of the ideas and values

that define our country and a broader comprehension of the domestic issues, institutions, and conditions that shape our foreign relations;

- Better understand major international and national security issues and how policies are developed to address them; and
- Develop a fuller understanding of the role of the U.S. foreign affairs agencies and the Congress in order to improve overall communication, cooperation and coordination.<sup>33</sup>

Each year about 30 senior civilian and military officials were selected to participate in the Senior Seminar, half of whom came from the Foreign and Civil Service of the Department. They were joined by officers nominated by the Department of Defense, United States Information Agency, United States Agency for International Development, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard. Officers from other agencies, such as Agriculture, Treasury, and Commerce have also participated in the seminar.<sup>34</sup> It provided a great opportunity for senior government executives, including future ambassadors, to work with and share perspectives from many of the departments that contribute to whole-of-government power. This needs to be brought back.

The State Department does send limited numbers of personnel through the military war colleges and implemented a mandatory Fundamentals of Supervision course for first time supervisors. But it has not gone as far as many other agencies and departments in embracing a continuum of training. There is a noted absence in short-term training opportunities. One small example, taken from just one specific year and educational organization, helps illustrate the point: Brookings Executive Education, in cooperation with Washington University of St. Louis, offers annual programs in policy, leadership, and strategy. In the 2014-2015 academic year, I enrolled in nine of the 44 classes offered, and within that cohort only two of my 167 fellow students, or 1.2 percent, were from DOS or USAID (See Figure 2).

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32 DOS position description for the AFRICOM Regional Security Advisor, 2015, provided by Department of State Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization

33 Harry Gilmore, "The Senior Seminar," United States Department of State, May 1997, [http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/publications/statemag/statemag\\_may/cs3.html](http://1997-2001.state.gov/www/publications/statemag/statemag_may/cs3.html).

34 Ibid.

Sadly, the federal department that was least likely to take advantage of this high quality training opportunity was the State Department. An advantage of courses like those offered at Brookings is the opportunity to meet and work with others from across all federal departments. It is this soft collaboration that DOS lacks.

## CONCLUSION

War is easy; peace is hard. The discussions calling for implementation of all elements of national power to address shaping U.S. foreign policy will fall on deaf ears until real efforts are made within the executive departments to better align themselves. Simple fixes such as geographic alignment, staff exchanges at the regional level, and increased training for state department personnel can, at minimal cost, foster a sense of cooperation and break down some of the barriers to cooperation that exist today.

The answer to the question “What if before the war, everyone came?” or more specifically, “What if U.S. federal departments worked more closely in peacetime?” is a simple one. If all elements of national power were aligned to realistic, common goals and a foreign policy that recognized the primacy of national security, then perhaps fewer wars would result. And when war is required as an extension of foreign policy by other means, then all of government will be ready with the full range of tools—diplomatic, information, military, and economic—to win the war and move on.

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