

New Foreign Policy Capability

by Robert D. Payne III

On September 5, 2017 Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, in an attempt to achieve positive effects in the strategic narrative of the war there, dropped thousands of leaflets hoping to inspire support for Coalition efforts among the majority ambivalent population. What happened was the exact opposite, a direct attack on the largest U.S. base in the country.

“The U.S. military in Afghanistan apologized Wednesday for distributing leaflets featuring an image “highly offensive” to Muslims. The leaflets dropped Tuesday night over parts of Parwan province showed the Shahada, the Muslim profession of faith, printed on the image of a dog, an animal viewed by many Muslims as unclean...After the leaflet drop, a Taliban suicide bomber blew himself up Wednesday outside a base used by American forces, wounding four civilians.”¹

Once again, western forces are causing self-inflicted wounds by ceding critical ground in the strategic narrative space of warfare to its enemy. It does not matter how many times the U.S. destroys an ISIS stronghold or kills a Taliban key leader so long as the people the U.S. is attempting to support see the U.S. as the cause of all their turmoil reinforced by the U.S.’s own messaging. Now is the time for the United States to ask itself why it appears to be incapable of accomplishing most of its major foreign policy goals. The answer might be that those institutions created to execute a foreign policy agenda, primarily the State Department and Department of Defense, are no longer adequate to effectively accomplish what is needed.

The National Security Act of 1947 was created to aid the President during the post-WWII/Cold War era by establishing the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and subsequently various national intelligence agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The 1947 National Security Act was a response to a threat environment that was remarkably distinct from the pre-WWII era. While the end of the Cold War might have necessitated some updates to the

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Figure 1. A photograph of the leaflet distributed by U.S. forces in Afghanistan on September 5, 2017.²

overarching guidance from 1947, the future threat environment during the Clinton and George W. Bush presidencies was simply too obscure to comprehend. Therefore, instead of anticipation, threat reaction became the standard operating procedure.

Today, there are four inarguable realities President Trump has to recognize when implementing his foreign policy agenda:

1. The United States has proven incapable of ending conflicts in the Middle East after fifteen years of sustained combat.
2. The State Department has proven incapable of securing peace agreements with key actors influencing the current conflicts in Ukraine, Korea, and the Middle East.
3. The Department of Defense overwhelms the Department of State in terms of international influence, due to its robust international presence and significantly greater funding.
4. The Department of Defense is currently

more involved than ever before in social issues such as climate change, human rights, and humanitarian aid/development efforts.

This article seeks to address how future administrations can reconcile the four challenges presented. It presents a historical analysis of how warfare has changed and why that change has resulted in sixteen straight years of conflict in the Middle East without an end in sight. It then presents a historical analysis of previous generations' attempts to reform the national security structure culminating in the success of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols reform act. Finally, it presents what a new national security structure might look like and how it can address the four challenges presented.

The Power of Narrative in Warfare

What is the power of narrative in warfare? Narratives have dominated American politics for decades as the evolution of media capability and campaign tactics evolved. However, in a narrative dominated environment where “facts”

matter less than the “truths” that reinforce a preconceived belief, it is the narrative of warfare that is proving to have the most significant impact on global events today. Europe is experiencing a massive identity crisis resulting from the massive refugee migration resulting from turmoil in Syria born out of Iraq. Afghanistan is once again a toss-up with the resurgence of Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and ISIS. The common link between all these is a narrative: the “West” vs Islam. What the September leaflet incident demonstrates is that western militaries, and especially the U.S. military leading efforts across the Middle East, are currently incapable of positively impacting or countering the prevailing strategic narrative and thus incapable of winning modern wars.

This is not the first generation to face a challenge of this nature and it does not mean that all is doomed. What it does mean is that a new method of fighting war must be developed and with it a new institutional framework free from the intellectual chains of the past thirty years of warfare. The Truman administration was faced with a new nuclear world void of traditional European leadership. The Regan administration was faced with a numerically superior Russian threat and decades of inefficiency within the Department of Defense. What is required today is no different than what was required then, a new National Security Act that redefines the tools of national security within the Executive Branch and empowers the Commander and Chief to employ those tools in a way that wins the peace, not just a battle.

In 2011 the world witnessed the popular uprising against several Middle Eastern and North African regimes. This event has since been labeled “the Arab Spring.” These groups were not organized militias, but rather the civil body who leveraged their social networks to unite and mobilize:

Tunisia’s “Jasmine Revolution” is the first popular uprising to topple an established

government in the Middle East and North Africa since the Iranian revolution of 1979; it’s also the spark that ignited and inspired other revolutions in the region. It unfolded in three phases: First, on December 17, 2011, a young Tunisian street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire in hopelessness and to protest his treatment at the hands of the authorities.... A brutal security crackdown followed, reported in choking details by online social media. Second, when protests reached the capital, Tunis, the government responded with even more brutality.... Lastly, the President, Zine el-Abedin Ben Ali... promised to create 300,000 jobs, but it was too late; protesters now just wanted the regime to

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fall and its President stripped of any power. On January 14, Ben Ali and his family fled the country taking refuge in Saudi Arabia. This act marked the end of one of the Arab world’s most repressive regimes. It was a victory for people power and perhaps the first time ever in history that an Arab dictator has been removed by a revolution rather than a coup d’état.³

The key takeaway is that a lightly armed popular uprising overthrew an oppressive government. What was the catalyst for this action? What drove the behavior of so many people to change their daily actions from accepting or tolerating the government’s control? While there were surely multiple factors, the narrative of one common man’s tragic end was the spark. It was a credible story of an oppressed man’s unwillingness to take more oppression. It was logical that he was

incapable of fighting the government. It was an emotional story of a man who sought a painful death rather than subject himself to the pain of government oppression. That powerful narrative lit the region on fire.

Narrative's Dominate Role in War Outcomes

What is war and how has narrative taken such a dominant role in its success or failure? Carl Von Clausewitz described war as a paradoxical trinity whose first component is primordial violence kindled by the passion of the people.⁴ For the U.S. and Western societies this passion for violence was drastically diminished following August 1945. The Enola Gay dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, killing 70,000 people followed by the Bockscar,

The social order and tolerance for war changed as a result of nuclear weapons, raising the significance of narrative space in warfare.

which dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, August 9, killing 80,000 more people. In the coming years, tens of thousands of people died from the radiation fallout and exposure to the blast. Subsequently, not a single nuclear weapon has been employed against another state or non-state actor. The social order and tolerance for war changed as a result of nuclear weapons, raising the significance of narrative space⁵ in warfare. Following World War II, the following three societal changes set the stage for the rise and importance of narrative's space in warfare: the threat of nuclear war, a change of political representation, and the desire to contain the violence of nuclear weapons through the practice of limited war. Today, the current conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria demonstrate narrative's importance to the state of warfare.

Total War/Threat of Nuclear War

Prior to the use of atomic bombs, total war theory (meaning civilians are legitimate targets with the intent of breaking their will to end the war quickly and the accepted use of all available weapons to achieve the desired end of the war) dominated military thought. The theory of total war for the following discussion is not attributed to any single theorist's prescription of total war, but rather accepts that whole societies are an acceptable target for military gain. The U.S. Civil War is one conflict that illustrates total war. General Ulysses S. Grant directed General William T. Sherman to attack the Confederacy's heartland and cut off their lines of communication to deny the Confederates desperately needed war resources. When marching into Alabama, General Sherman issued a warning to the residents:

The government of the United States has in North Alabama any and all rights which [it chooses] to enforce in war, to take [Confederate] lives, their houses, their lands, their everything, because they cannot deny that war exists there, and war is simply power unconstrained by constitution or compact.⁶

Following the American Civil War, the Industrial Revolution continued to increase war's destructive capability. Likewise, military theory in Western nations continued to accept little distinction between civilians and soldiers during war. When World War I occurred there were roughly ten million civilian deaths.⁷ Despite this monumental loss of life total war theory did not drastically change as the dominant way to execute warfare.

In the time between World War I and World War II Italian General Giulio Douhet wrote his theoretical work on the potential impact of aerial capabilities in war titled, *Command of the Air*. Douhet's predictions of air power's effects were largely validated during World War II in

the aftermath of the atomic bombs. As Douhet wrote: “aerial warfare admits of no defense, only offense. We must therefore resign ourselves to the offensives the enemy inflicts upon us, while striving to put all our resources to work to inflict even heavier ones upon him.”⁸ Although Douhet did not discernibly foresee nuclear bombs, they nonetheless personified the formidable power he predicted:

[T]ake the center of a large city and imagine what would happen among the civilian population during a single attack by a single bombing unit. For my part, I have no doubt that its impact upon the people would be terrible...What could happen to a single city in a single day could also happen to ten, twenty, fifty cities. And, since news travels fast, even without telegraph, telephone, or radio, what, I ask you, would be the effect upon civilians of other cities, not yet stricken but equally subject to bombing attacks? What civil or military authority could keep order, public services functioning, and production going under such a threat?⁹

Douhet was able to envision this because he, like his peers, accepted civilian populations as necessary military targets. Douhet also believed cities are hubs of everything a nation needs to conduct war: industry, productivity, finance, and population. Those who witnessed the aftermath of Little Boy and Fat Man around the world realized Douhet’s prediction. Douhet predicted that air power would change the way societies endured warfare by breaking societal resolve: “A complete breakdown of the social structure cannot but take place in a country subjected to this kind of merciless pounding from the air. The time would soon come when, to put an end to horror and suffering, the people themselves, driven by the instinct of self-preservation, would rise up and demand an end to the war.”¹⁰ As Douhet predicted, the entire social structure of the world arguably did break down after 1945

as societies tolerance for the violence of warfare diminished.

Changes in Political Representation

The next significant change following August 1945 was the rise of democratic governments beginning with the creation of the United Nations (UN). The U.S. had never been considered a world leader, but after dropping the atomic bomb and declaring itself the sole arbiter of nuclear warfare, the U.S. unabashedly assumed the mantle of leadership directing the creation of the UN. The top priority of the UN was to summarily outlaw warfare. Article 1 section one of the UN charter reads:

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.¹¹

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In 1944, there were seventeen democracy-based governments, thirty-two anocracies,¹² and twenty autocracies.¹³ Democracy was the least used, and also the least populated form of government. In effect, this equated to less than two thirds of the world population actively participating in their political bodies.¹⁴ However, this began to change drastically after World War II as the U.S. began to play a leading role in global affairs. In 1948, there were twenty-four democracies and by 2009 there were eighty-seven, an increase of over 350

percent.¹⁵ Societies who were now living in fear of nuclear annihilation, did not want to engage in war. Joining the UN was therefore believed to be a logical way to prevent war. When the UN was founded in 1945 as an international body dedicated to maintaining peace there were just fifty-one member nations.¹⁶ As of 2011, there were 193 member nations,¹⁷ each one self-interested, self-determined and influencing

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every international law brought forward. Each UN member nation is also entitled to their own sovereignty, protection of human rights, and ability to dictate terms to the international community on various legalities to international treaties. Therefore the desire of the people, who now have a monumentally greater say in the global political process, began to change the conduct of war itself.

The Rise of Individualism and the Practice of Limited War

A third significant change impacting war today is the global spread of individualism. According to Dr. Jay Ogilvy, “day by day, week by week, year by year we are experiencing a gradual but pervasive spread of individual autonomy and increasing confidence in personal judgment.”¹⁸ Ogilvy draws his conclusions from multiple studies, but specifically identifies Ron Inglehart’s global values survey data and Moises Naim’s book, *The End of Power: From Boardrooms to Battlefields and Churches to States, Why Being in Charge Isn’t What It Used to Be*, as primary sources. Ogilvy presents three trends, the more revolution, the mobility

revolution, and the mentality revolution, that are causing the global rise of individualism:

The More Revolution is based on the fact that there are simply so many more people who have risen from poverty and servitude to join the middle class, such as the 660 million Chinese who have escaped poverty since 1981.... When people are more numerous and living fuller lives, they become more difficult to regiment and control.... The Mobility Revolution makes all those people harder to control. It also changes the distribution of power within and among populations, whether through the rise of ethnic, religious, and professional diasporas or as individual vectors of ideas, capital, and faiths that can be either destabilizing or empowering.... The Mentality Revolution: People who get more tend to want still more again: the effect of the More and Mobility revolutions has been to vastly broaden the cognitive, even emotional impact of more access to resources and the ability to move, learn, connect and communicate.¹⁹

This rise of individualism describes what soldiers encounter every day in the operating environment, individuals who know more is available to them, individuals who can rapidly travel to join a cause and fight or flee a war-torn environment, and individuals who are being cognitively impacted by exposure to a global environment. These same individuals are also increasing their roles in the political process, as democratic principles continue to spread. The battlefield is changing and soldiers are forced deal with this change every day in the absence of any capability to effectively impact it.

Now, with this understanding of the big social changes a look at some individual events can be made to see narrative’s rising application. For example, the spreading idea of political equality and human rights resulted in the collapse of a multi-centuries-old practice by

Western societies – colonialism. India’s unique approach to independence through non-violence should not be overlooked as a military revolution as it reflects the principle of supreme excellence defined by Sun Tzu, breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting.²⁰ Following World War II Great Britain was a skeleton of its former glory. While at the time it may have seemed counterintuitive, based solely on technological disparity, it is not difficult to imagine the massive population of India overwhelming the entirety of the British Colonial forces in an armed revolution. However, Mahatma Gandhi presented a narrative of non-violence by speaking and practicing non-violence. Images of his non-violent protests legitimized his words and deeds, spreading his narrative of non-violence globally as an important means to securing India’s independence. Great Britain’s concession to a non-violent movement, one that never challenged the military capacity of Britain’s forces, is a strong statement in the affirmative that Western societies had changed their tolerance of warfare’s violence following World War II.

The Korean War is another example where a strategic narrative set the geopolitical stage for the Cold War to remain “cold” in terms of nuclear weapons. The U.S. limited the aims of the war by leading a UN coalition to, “call for the immediate cessation of hostilities; and calls upon the authorities of North Korea to withdraw forthwith their armed forces to the 38th parallel; (and for the) United Nations Commission on Korea to... observe the withdrawal of North Korea forces to the 38th parallel”²¹ limiting the aims of the war. The aim of the war referenced here was not to defeat or destroy any opposing force, but rather to return the status quo of a divided peninsula. General Douglas MacArthur chose to ignore this, of course, and fought the war in the only way that made sense to him. He allowed the UN forces to move past the 38th parallel and threatened to widen the war

into China while advocating for the use of nuclear weapons. In response to a request from the President on the subject of MacArthur’s command as a result of his actions in Korea, the Joint Chiefs sent the President the following statement:

In the very complex situation created by the decision to confine the conflict to Korea and to avoid the third World War, it was necessary to have a Commander-in-Chief more responsive to control from Washington. He (MacArthur) failed to comply with directives requiring that speeches, press releases, or other public statements concerning military and foreign policy be cleared by the appropriate department before being issued, and for officials overseas to refrain from direct communication on military or foreign policy with newspapers, magazines, or other publicity media in the United States.²²

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MacArthur’s command contradicted the strategic narrative of the Truman administration and it had to be dealt with. President Truman agreed and because of this MacArthur was fired. When that happened the U.S. effectively told the world that it would seek to contain the violence of war, by not widening it, and would not use nuclear weapons even when U.S. soldier’s lives were at great risk. In other words, Truman and the U.S. crafted a new strategic Cold War narrative. The front page news of General MacArthur’s farewell address, along with his picture and the crowds greeting him as he faded away solidified this new narrative: out with the old, in with the

new.

As anti-colonialism spread in the mid-1950s and onward, some colonies chose violent revolutions and tested the strategic Cold War narrative. There were no less than thirty-one guerrilla wars between 1945 and 1972.²³ Limited war continued through limited means, absent nuclear weapon use, over the decades as a means of combating the guerrilla forces. Within Vietnam there was a clear distinction of warfare from the strategic to the tactical level impacted by the narrative space. On January 31, 1968, some 70,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces launched the Tet Offensive (named

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for the lunar new year holiday called Tet), a coordinated series of fierce attacks on more than 100 cities and towns in South Vietnam. The Communist People's Army of Vietnam planned the offensive in an attempt both to foment rebellion among the South Vietnamese population and encourage the U. S. to scale back its support of the Saigon regime. Though U.S. and South Vietnamese forces managed to hold off the Communist attacks, news coverage of the offensive (including the lengthy Battle of Hue) shocked and dismayed the American public and further eroded support for the war effort:

Tactically and operationally, Tet was a major victory for the US and SVN.... the South Vietnamese government was intact and stronger; the armed forces were larger, more effective, and more confident; the people had rejected the idea of a general uprising; and the enemy forces... were much weaker.... Paradoxically, Tet was a major political psychological,

diplomatic, and strategic defeat for the armed forces of the (U.S.)... Tet and the events that followed destroyed the will of the American people and the Johnson Administration... the media portrayed the campaign as an overwhelming defeat.... At Hue the destruction caused by Marines and US airpower were shown without the context of the stubborn tenacity of the enemy and without stories of the atrocities of the NVA and VC, who killed thousands of unarmed people, including women and children.... This was dishonesty. In the aftermath, the press did little to correct the views it had created.... Americans watched other Americans being killed and wounded. They observed the behavior of the South Vietnamese. And they concluded that their government was lying to them, that Vietnam was not worth saving, and that the war could not be won.²⁴

Despite heavy casualties, North Vietnam achieved a strategic victory with the Tet Offensive, as the attacks marked a turning point in the Vietnam War and the beginning of the slow, painful American withdrawal from the region.

The U.S. was a nuclear society fully capable of destroying the North Vietnamese within days, yet they rejected this extreme violence of warfare at its own peril not because they were losing, but because the story coming out of Vietnam was too contradictory to what the average American believed was happening. General Vo Nguyen Giap is credited as stating that the North Vietnamese were preparing to negotiate peace following his defeat during the Tet offensive, but it was the American media that presented the outcome of the battle as a loss by America giving him and the North hope. "After Tet, the U.S. reexamined and then changed its military policy, placing new limits on American participation and setting the stage for the withdrawal of American troops."²⁵ President Lyndon Johnson withdrew

his re-election efforts just a few months after Tet. Guerrilla fighters around the world noticed. “As an Algerian militant put it, if his fighters killed thirty soldiers in a village, this would be reported in a few lines on the back page of the world press whereas the noise of even a small bomb in a big city would reverberate throughout the world and make headlines.”²⁶ It is within the headlines that narrative dominates more than weapons.

Today, the U.S. military has the ability to strike against enemy combatants by delivering precision munitions with greater accuracy than ever before. With its ability to project combat power, precision guided munitions can be fired from land, air, or sea, drastically reducing any unintentional loss of life due to indiscriminate fires. This capability has enabled the U.S. to continue to be the dominant global military force, as evident by its complete destruction of the Iraqi Army both in 1991 and in 2003. Since 2001 the U.S. has been in a constant state of conflict with non-state actors in the Middle East. The military presents a narrative of precision warfare fully compliant with the international law of war. Between 2001 and 2014 the U.S. spent \$7.7 trillion on its military.²⁷ In spite of this capability and financial investment, the U.S. has been unable to decisively end its conflicts in the Middle East.

The inability to end these conflicts reflects a fundamental change in human interaction that is impacting the operational environment. It is through this conflict that the collective social changes, Western societies’ desire to limit war’s violence, the rise of democracies, and the growth of individual actors, can be seen as merging into a new form of warfare where firepower plays a less significant a role in achieving victory than in past generations. The narrative space is growing and redefining how people interact during times of war.

The media landscape has changed from a uni-directional to a peer-to-peer

environment. The participatory nature of social networks, real time connectivity, and mobile devices have changed the psychological assumptions and actions of media users—they are not just consumers, they are also producers and distributors. The power of social networks and mobile connectivity creates a myriad opportunities that facilitate motivation and encourage persistence, such opportunities foster empowerment, agency, social validation, affiliation, and a sense of mastery.²⁸

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The Power of Narratives

Narratives are stories communicated from one person to another. In order to be of any significance they must propagate.

The Arab Spring illustrates that the increased capability to share narratives via mobile technology is increasing the impact of narratives, including their impact on warfare. It is apparent that over the last few years ISIS has studied the use and effectiveness of communication technology, as well as understanding what it takes to spread an idea.

ISIS has Twitter accounts, Facebook accounts, and other social media platforms it uses daily. It has publicized executions for a global audience. James Foley was beheaded and Muath Al-Kassabeh was burned to death in a cage. Even children shot captives in the back of their heads. These acts were recorded and posted online because ISIS is delivering a narrative: the act of killing is a righteous necessity, the words; executions are purposeful, the deeds; ISIS then publishes their acts to send a clear message legitimized by the graphic images accessible on every networked device to a global audience. They are operating in the narrative space because

they understand its value to achieving their strategic goals.

The propagation of ISIS narrative is not just impacting Middle Eastern nations. Even in the U.S., middle class college educated youths have been inspired by ISIS narrative. The Threat Knowledge Group reported in their November 2015 publication *ISIS: The threat to the United States*:

Between March 2014 and November 2015, 82 individuals in the United States affiliating with ISIS have been interdicted by law enforcement, whether traveling to fight, recruiting, fundraising, planning to travel, promoting ISIS, or initiating or carrying out attacks (including 7 unnamed minors and 4 killed in the course of an attack). This is an average of 4.1 ISIS arrests per month on American soil.²⁹

Narratives enable radicalization's effects across continents.

Narratives enable radicalization's effects across continents. Regardless of whether the narratives are a larger master narrative, a dominant or minority local narrative, or the personal narrative from a trusted mentor, friend, or family member, they impact the threat environment future U.S. military efforts will face.

President George Bush clearly pushed a narrative of a global war on terrorism that he passed on to the next administration. President Obama sought to end Bush's narrative by changing the words to overseas contingency operation, but after eight years of not calling it a war on terror the war continues. After sixteen years there is still no end in sight to this war and no American narrative that unifies action, drives operations, or challenges the opposition to do anything different in the narrative space they have been dominating.

The threat of nuclear weapons, the change of political representation alongside the rise of individualism, and the containment of violence through limited war has collectively elevated the importance of narrative in 21st century warfare. Simply put, Clausewitz's trinity of war has changed. The prospect of nuclear annihilation concerns the world to such an extent that non-proliferation treaties, resolutions, and initiatives have been enacted several times since their sole use in Japan. Since World War II, the physical destructive potential of nuclear warfare has not been released again, in spite of nuclear weapons proliferation to no less than nine nations in possession of 15,800 nuclear warheads.³⁰ The use of the atomic bombs in 1945 pushed Western societies to their capacity for tolerating violence in warfare. Western society's rejection of total war theory has dulled one of Clausewitz's three principles of war, the passion of the people to perform violence. This has aided the rise of narrative space, and it is likely to significantly impact warfare for the foreseeable future. Therefore, it must be considered that the current national security structure is not structured in a way to win not just wars, but peace in modern and future warfare.

Changing the National Security Structure – Background

So how can a total change to the national security structure happen? Ostensibly, this task might simply seem to be too difficult to execute. However, monumental shifts such as this have already occurred twice since World War II, and learning how those shifts occurred will provide a framework for how to proceed this time. The combination of the National Security Act of 1947 and its subsequent amendments, especially the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, is the most significant change of this kind. Collectively, these actions created the Department of Defense, Secretary of Defense, National Security Council, Air Force, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs,

while eliminating the War Department, reducing the significance of the Service secretaries, and shifting authority from Service branches to combatant commanders. The following is an analysis of how the Goldwater-Nichols Act was passed. Furthermore, three critical lessons then suggest how one might successfully codify the Department of Foreign Affairs into law: 1) failure is the most important catalyst for enacting reform, 2) Congress is the best vehicle for significant reform, 3) anticipate, and therefore overcome, more resistance from within the Departments than from Congress.

When things are going well there is little desire to change. On the other hand, when failures abound the necessity to change is apparent to all. The initial effort to reform the Department of Defense began almost as soon as the National Security Act was passed. President Truman was successful with a minor reform in 1949, but efforts continued with every new administration. These efforts were met with significant resistance that even prevented President Dwight Eisenhower, legendary general of World War II, from achieving the necessary reforms he had identified. Coming out of the Vietnam War, the first “war” not declared by Congress, the Department of Defense repeatedly had to justify its overwhelming capacity for lethality to the cost in human lives and tax dollars for little to no strategic gain for the nation. The Service Chiefs could easily continue to discuss how effective their respective branch was at killing the enemy while placing blame on political policy to explain why their outcomes failed to meet expectations. However, by 1980 events started to occur that did not allow for the Defense Department to deny its shortcomings.

The first of these events was the failed operation, *Desert One*. The attempted rescue mission of U.S. citizens taken hostage in the Iranian revolution required six months of planning and preparation and involved eight helicopters and six C130 transport planes.

Ultimately, the mission failed after two helicopters sustained maintenance issues and another crashed into a C130, killing eight and wounding four.³¹ The second of these events was the Beirut barracks bombing that occurred on October 23, 1983. Approximately 1,800 Marines were in Beirut as part of a multinational peacekeeping force. Hezbollah claimed credit for the multi-national coordinated attack that killed 241 U.S. Marines at the airport barracks and 58 French soldiers in a second building. It was the most devastating loss of life in Marine Corps history since the Battle of Iwo Jima during World War II.³² President Regan quickly ended all U.S. military involvement in the peacekeeping operation as a result.

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These events had common failures: “poor military advice to political leaders, lack of unity of command, and inability to operate jointly.”³³ The identification of the reasons for these failures did not take long. A lack of inter-service training dominated to such an extent that the first time the Air Force and Army forces met during operation *Desert One* was at the rally point in Iran. Their radios could not communicate with each other, there was no identified mission commander, and there were no contingency plans in place. Bottom line: “the participating service units trained separately... it happened because the services were so separate and so determined to remain separate.”³⁴

From their point of view, Congress summarily intended to reform six overarching problems within the Defense Department: an imbalance between service and joint interests, inadequate military advice to political leaders,

unqualified joint-duty serving officers, an imbalance between joint commander's responsibilities and authority, poor strategic planning, and congressional micro-management. Congressional hearings and inquiries identified these failures and helped to spur reform efforts.

If one believes that an equivalent scope of reform of today's foreign policy institutions is needed, then these glaring failures from the 1980's provide a basis from which to begin. Is there an imbalance between diplomatic and military efforts and resourcing today? Does the military train effectively with other departments to impact foreign policy outcomes in the same area of operation? Is military advice producing the military outcomes expected?

From 1958 to 1986, there weren't any meaningful reforms of the National Defense Act.

Are the right members of the military and diplomatic corps qualified for their positions and expectations? Is there an imbalance between military responsibilities and humanitarian responsibilities? Are the strategic plans working out? Is Congress executing its proper role? While all of these answers will differ from the answers of the 1980's inquires, after fifteen years of sustained conflict in the Middle East and growing threats of conflict in Europe and in Asia, asking these questions is just as important today as it was prior to the Goldwater-Nichols reform efforts.

The National Security Act of 1947 was born out of an identification to change the way military advice, operations, and capabilities were developed following the lessons learned during World War II. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Joint Chiefs of Staff to advise him during the war, but the disputes between the Navy Department and the War Department "were too severe that the idea of unifying the two

military departments had to be put off until after the war."³⁵ Additionally, "the contributions of the JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) were lessened by its adoption on its own of the principle of reaching unanimous agreement before speaking."³⁶ The National Security Act took two years to become law after World War II and was amended three times over the next eleven years, all in the effort to strengthen the secretary of defense while reducing the importance of the service secretaries and "strengthen civilian control"³⁷ over the military.

From 1958 to 1986, there weren't any meaningful reforms of the National Defense Act. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, when the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was passed, it took "four years and 241 days – a period longer than U.S. involvement in World War II."³⁸ Calls for reform along the way, however, were not absent. The Kennedy administration produced the Symington report, the Nixon administration produced the Blue Ribbon Defense Panel, and the Carter administration produced the Defense Organization Studies. The Symington report recommended three significant changes: "(1) abolish the military departments, (2) replace the JCS with a single chief of staff, and (3) establish three functional unified commands."³⁹ The Nixon Blue Ribbon Defense Panel had 113 recommendations, with the New York Times reporting the most significant as being "the removal of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from involvement in military operations...(and) operations responsibilities of the chiefs would be taken over by a new civilian Deputy Defense Secretary with his own military staff."⁴⁰

The Executive Branch repeatedly failed to reform the Defense Department. In no uncertain terms, it required assistance from Congress. The catalyst for Congress to take up the cause of reform was the testimony from General David Jones, chairman of the JCS, who spoke before the House Armed Service Committee in a closed session on February 3, 1982. There, he

stated, “The system is broken. I have tried to reform it from inside, but I cannot. Congress is going to have to mandate necessary reforms.”⁴¹ Additional generals testified and the House Armed Service Committee began hearings on reform of the National Security Act resulting in the House passing a bill on August 16, 1982.

Change is fundamentally difficult, and in the event of significant change on the scale of creating a new Department of Foreign Affairs, one should anticipate that the senior members of the most significantly impacted institutions will most significantly resist the change. The Executive Branch has the power to appoint individuals to positions within the government, but it cannot reform itself in a meaningful way. Based on how our government was established, Congress must be involved in order to enact meaningful changes. From President Eisenhower to President Carter, the military services were able to outmaneuver and deflect changes they perceived as counter to their best interests. It didn’t matter how many administrations conducted well-informed research and present insightful evidence for promoting reform. Rather, what mattered was Congress taking up the cause. If another significant change within the organization of the Executive Branch is going to take place, then Congress *must* be the branch to force this change.

It took just six months for the House of Representatives to pass a bill reforming the Department of Defense following General Jones’ testimony. The following year, the Senate took up the effort in the Senate Armed Service Committee. The focus of the Senate was “on organization of the entire Department of Defense.”⁴² By the time this happened, General John Wickham had taken over as the JCS and adamantly opposed reform. Joining General Wickham was the Marine Corps Commandant, General P.X. Kelley, now tallying “all five Joint Chiefs ... in opposition to reorganization.”⁴³

The Chiefs were successful in convincing

Senator John Tower (R-TX), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and the committee in the antireform corner through the whole period of 1983-1984, which effectively turned the effort into a partisan battle between the unified Republican President and Senate team and the Democratic House of Representatives. However, elections bring change and new Congresses allow for new priorities. Chief among these changes was Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ) becoming chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee.

Senator Goldwater made “defense

Change is fundamentally difficult... one should anticipate that the senior members of the most significantly impacted institutions will most significantly resist the change.

reorganization” his top priority⁴⁴ and reached out to Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) for assistance. As both chambers of Congress worked toward reform, the Executive Branch jumped onboard by conducting its own study, the Packard Commission, which aligned them with Congress. Even three years after the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, Congress accused the Pentagon of failing to implement the required changes. As reported in the New York Times April 9, 1989, “The Pentagon has not undertaken improvements required by the 1986 Defense Reorganization Act...the House committee believes the Pentagon is dragging its heels on changes it never did like.”⁴⁵

Running into resistance from within the Executive Branch should be the least of the Congress’s worries when taking up monumental reform. The proof of these reforms’ positive impact can now be seen in hindsight. There is little doubt that the U.S. Military is the most lethal fighting force today. Joint doctrine guides

multi-service operations like never before, as demonstrated by operations in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last fifteen years. More importantly though, since 1986 there have been very few significant efforts by an administration or the Congress to reform the Department of Defense, unlike the administrations that immediately followed Truman after passing the National Security Act of 1947.

The efforts that created the National Security Act of 1947 and its amendment in the form of the Goldwater-Nichols Act 1986 were born out of necessity. The world changed after World War II, as did the global role for the U.S. A National Defense apparatus was created to resist a nuclear Soviet Union and win a potential nuclear World War III. Today, the world has significantly changed once again. The threat comes out of the desert in sandals with a cell phone. A single murder can inspire immense reactions from a global audience. A webpage can manipulate facts and change the behavior of its audience. There was a time for monumental changes within the Executive Branch to deal with the threats it faced in the 1980's. These changes resulted from identified failures. They took years to enact and it took a willing Congress to get it done. If changes on the scale of the National Security Act or the Goldwater-Nichols Act are going to be done today than asking the tough questions that identify failure, planning for the long game, and working through Congress is a proven means of achieving this change.

Proposed Changes to the National Security Structure

Now that it has been identified change is needed to the national security structure and how change to the national security structure has occurred before, what does that change look like? The following presents the creation of a "Department of Foreign Affairs" that realigns the chain of command of the Department of Defense and Department of State to enable more efficient

synchronization of effort, flow of information, and allocation of resources in support of strategic objectives. From lines of accounting, to reporting procedures, to information sharing, a single chain of command would reduce the inflated bureaucracy that slows and often delays actions, diminishing the President's efforts to carry out particular foreign policy initiatives.

The structure of national security capability proposed in Figure 2 leverages the bureaucratic organization of the Department of Defense, strategic policy formation capability of the Department of State, military expertise of military formations, and cultural expertise of regional diplomats. It is assumed by putting this capability under a singular chain of command the synchronization of resources, timing of operations, and execution of operations will more effectively execute warfare and thus achieve a sustainable peace that has been unachievable to date.

First, no longer would military commanders be free to avoid fighting in the narrative space which they have proven counter-productive at doing. The local ambassador/policy formation lead would be responsible for crafting a strategic narrative that all forces in the conflict area would have to synchronize efforts with. This act alone could provide the single greatest impact missing in current military capability.

Second, no longer would the Department of State be left to negotiate peace or cease fire agreements absent the military as previously attempted in Syria, Ukraine, Korea, and the Middle East. Such negotiations would fall on the Regional Commander and his staff who is fully informed of military and diplomatic efforts because the commander is responsible for both. When the Secretary of Foreign Affairs speaks to a counterpart about no fly zones he or she will do so with the ability to simultaneously put military assets in place to enforce those constraints unlike Secretary Kerry in the waning days of the Obama administration with regards to Syria.

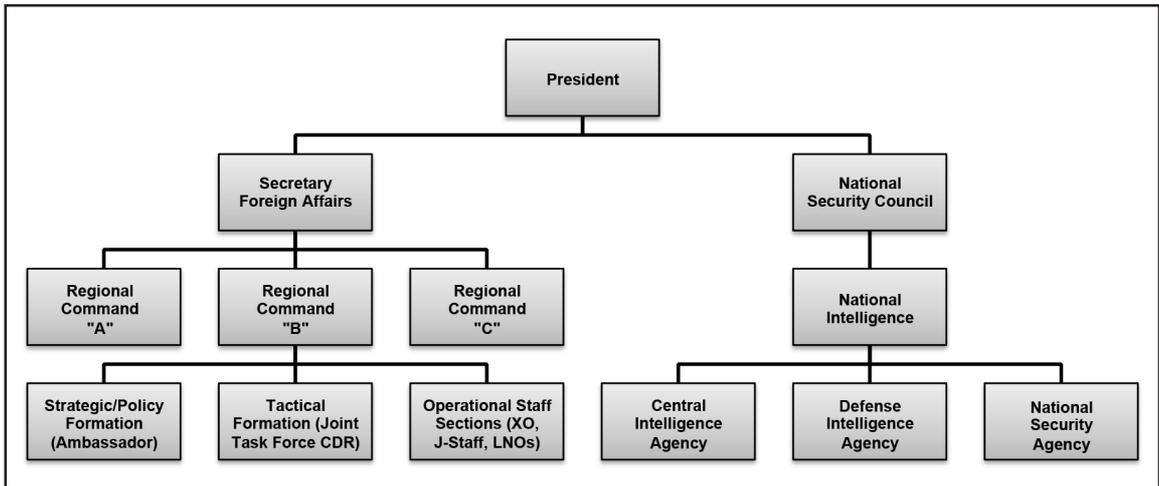


Figure 2. Proposed national security structure.

Third, no longer will the Department of Defense budget overwhelm the Department of State budget. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs will allocate funding against the capabilities in greatest need based on a single regional commander’s recommendation. Today the military has identified the need for greater cultural expertise, language skills, and diplomatic skills. All these capabilities reside within State, but are not funded to an amount that is scalable to military necessary in the Middle East. This would change at the discursion of the single chain of command responsible for employing these capabilities.

Fourth, executing operations in support of social issues such as climate change, human rights, and humanitarian aid/development issues would not be negatively impacted by the change. Administrations would have an equal, if not greater, capacity to support nations hit by national disasters or interdict genocidal acts by repressive governments.

Additionally, the National Security Council is structured in a way to maintain its place as the primary advisory council on policy for the administration. It maintains this place by taking a leading role of the intelligence agencies of the national security structure brining all intelligence collection efforts under a single chain of

command that reports directly to the President. This structure elevates the National Security Advisor to one of two primary advisors on all things national security related with command authority over subordinate organizations. The heads of the multiple intelligence agencies will lose an amount of autonomy currently enjoyed, but not to an extent that should compromise each organization’s ability to execute their individual missions.

The Senate should take an oversight role in the appointment of both the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and the National Security Advisor by providing their Constitutionally derived “consent” of individuals before any person assumes either of these positions. Additionally, Congress should maintain its current resourcing of oversight capacity, but will be able to consolidate some oversight due to the streamlining of command authority. By having the ability to focus on just two senior advisors to the President it is plausible that Congress with have an easier time with oversight of the Executive Branch increasing the American people’s ability to influence foreign policy agenda’s as well.

Conclusion

The world is different from the one that existed following WWII. We face challenges that are drastically different from the Cold War era. Is it any wonder that yesterday's institutions are incompatible with new global dynamics? A new National Security Act that creates a single Department of Foreign Affairs, thereby unifying many efforts of the State Department and the Department of Defense under a single chain of command, will help future presidents manage and execute their foreign policy efforts. A Department of Foreign Affairs will synchronize foreign policy efforts that account for the growing influence of narrative on policy decisions, as well as unify diplomatic and military capabilities, thereby streamlining critical foreign policy advice to the President. The last twenty years have demonstrated significant gaps in results coming from the current national security infrastructure, which has largely not changed since its inception in 1947. Now is the time to take bold action and reconcile the challenges of today with the capabilities needed to meet the challenges of tomorrow. **IAJ**

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