

Strategic Transformation: Aligning National Security Policy/Operations

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If there is one good thing to come out of the Global War on Terrorism, it may be that there is a growing realization, at long last, that there exists a serious disconnect at the highest levels of our government in coordinating interagency efforts to conduct what is now euphemistically called Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations¹. The military leadership has known this for some time, and there has been some recognition on the part of other agencies, but our government has not been able to act together at the interagency level in a manner which would allow full coordination of all actions related to SSTR. This is not the fault of politics, it is the fault of “that’s the way we used to do it” and a lack of leadership at the national security policy level. Now, it appears we are in the mode to adapt. The encouraging phenomenon is the maturation of ideas with respect to “transformation” both at the Department of State and the Department of Defense. The Secretary of State recently committed to “Transformational Diplomacy” which will involve global repositioning, regional focus, and localization.²

This paper addresses only one small aspect of a coordinated approach to SSTR, the boundary problems. The boundaries we set for conducting foreign policy have little or no relationship to the boundaries for our Combatant Commanders. If we are to have a “Unified Command Plan”, it ought to be unified at the national level, and now is the time to do it.

It Is Time to Realign

This writer believes that it is time to realign both the U.S. political-military boundaries and political-military thinking with respect to how we conduct our business and look after our interests overseas. That is, we need re-examine how we divide up the world for policy and war. What better time to do this than when Ms Rice is transforming the Department of State and Mr. Rumsfeld is transforming the Department of Defense? Who could better understand the need to “organize for combat” or in this case, organize for what the Hart-Rudman study calls an “opportunity-based strategy” ?³

The Hart-Rudman Phase III Report, “Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change”, recommended sweeping institutional changes for both DOD and State; yet the report did not go far enough to recognize the fundamental change required.⁴ In order to deal with an increasingly competitive world and to provide “the ballast of global stability”, DOD and State must fundamentally change the way they do business. We must align the regional boundaries for overseas theaters. We must co-locate key military and diplomatic personnel. And we must collaborate more closely to attain a unified approach to political-military affairs.

Realities

As one reporter put it:

The unintended consequences of the Goldwater-Nichols Act have included the weakening of civilian management of the military and the emergence of the uniformed military as the strongest policy voice in the national security community. The unprecedented statutory authority of the CinCs (now called Combatant Commanders) has given field commanders greater influence in the budget process, foreign policy formulation, and national security decision-making.⁵

Whether or not the military has too much influence in foreign policy, the general response of the military would be that there has been a huge void of guidance in foreign policy from those that ought to be formulating and executing it. Those that are on the ground frequently find themselves in the position of making foreign policy whether they want to or not.

Part of the problem is the disparate approaches to regional interests, and if anything our current Global War on Terrorism is more regional than local. We need to look seriously at how we organize regions for both diplomacy and security interests.

State Department Organization for Regional Policy

To be blunt, the State Department does not really address the regionalization issue very well. Their focus is on the Ambassadors appointed to each country, each of whom has direct access to the Secretary of State without any middlemen. Granted, these are political appointees in the main, but the fact of the matter is that we are dealing with regionalism if not globalism on a daily basis. Surely it is time for the State Department to “transform” into some more logical and meaningful way to conduct foreign policy.

There are regions that are recognized by the Department of State, and there are desks assigned to “manage” the affairs of regions, but the truth of the matter is that Ambassadors do not appreciate desk officers.

The State Department breaks regions down by various factors, but the bureaus, located in Washington, D.C. are organized as follows:

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA). Logically, the WHA includes all of Latin America and Canada. Formerly, Canada was positioned with Europe.

Bureau of European Affairs. This includes all of Europe, to include Greenland, Iceland, Russia, the former Soviet States, and Turkey. The area is generally bounded by the Atlantic Ocean, Barents Sea, Pacific Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea.

Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. This grouping includes the Northern Coastal states of Africa, the Middle East (to include Israel).

Bureau of African Affairs. This bureau is responsible for the Sub-Saharan portions of Africa.

Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. This region is comprised of China, Japan, the Koreans, Australia and the Southeast Asian states.

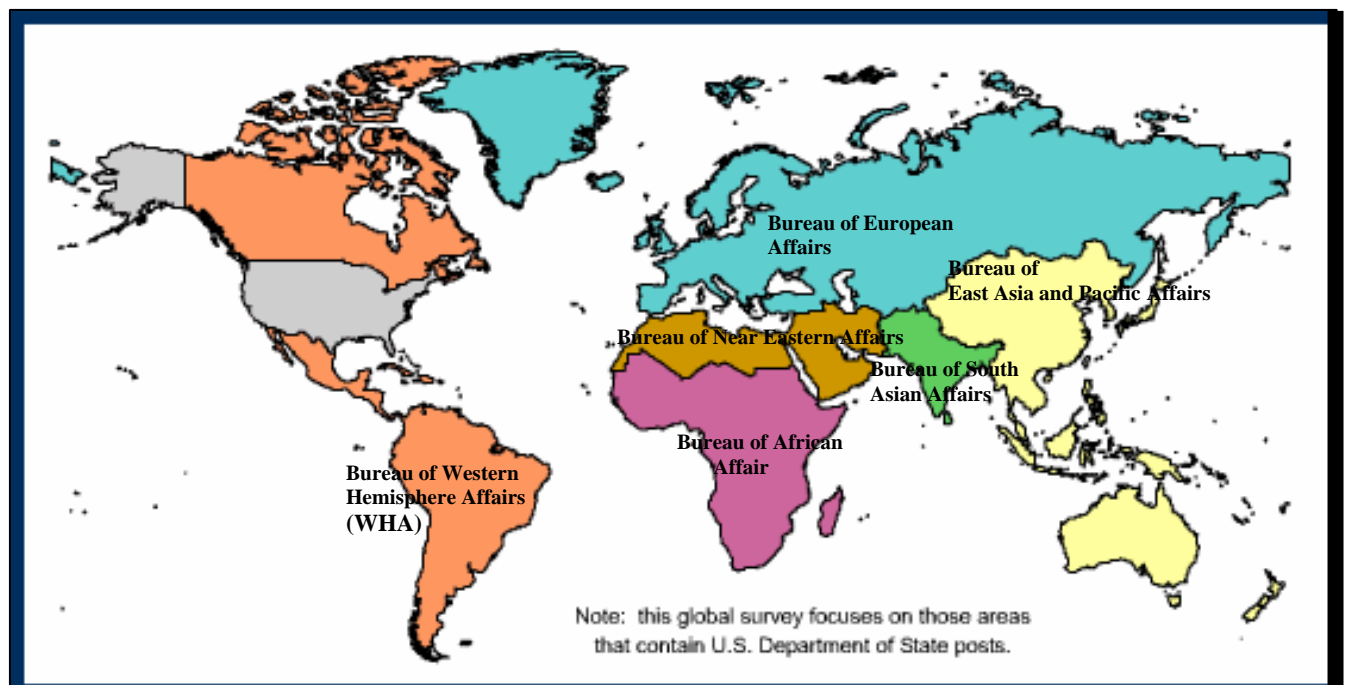


Figure 1: State Department Regional Areas (source: DOS web site)

Bureau of South Asian Affairs. This region includes Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

There are no DOS jurisdictions assigned to the seas or Polar Regions where there are few people. The regional desks are located in the halls of the State Department. They coordinate policy within their assigned regions. The relationships to the ambassadors of the countries in that region are on a cooperative basis similar to a staff supporting a commander in a military organization. Ambassadors have the authority to report directly to the Secretary of State.

Defense Department Regional Areas of Operation

The Department of Defense carries out orders to conduct military and non-military operations at the command of the President. These orders are carried out through a chain of command in foreign countries based on regional areas of responsibility specified by the Unified Command Plan (UCP). Recently realigned (primarily ocean areas), the UCP includes potential theaters of war to include sea, land and airspace.

U.S. European Command (EUCOM). The focus of EUCOM is NATO, but it has a large portion of Africa for which it is responsible (see map at Figure 2) as well as the Atlantic sea lanes. In addition, Russia and the Former Soviet Union states are “unassigned”. Unwritten is the fact that should there be a military requirement in Russia, it would be a EUCOM responsibility. Israel is in the EUCOM area of responsibility. *Go figure!* This highlights the political sensitivity of military-unique boundaries and argues for common DOS/DOD boundaries.

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). This region includes a large part of the Middle East but not Israel, which is the responsibility of EUCOM. CENTCOM incorporates most of the “Stans”, former Central Asian states of the Soviet Union. It is curious that the CENTCOM boundary includes Pakistan but not India, splitting another of the key hotspots of potential conflict, India/Pakistan, between two theaters but the DOS regional map does not.

U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). PACOM is the largest theater in area of the five “warfighting” CINCs. This theater extends from the coastal areas of California to the Island of Madagascar, and except for the Korea/Japan region it is mostly a naval theater because of the vast ocean areas.



Figure 2 Unified Command Plan Commanders' Areas of Responsibility
(Source: Department of Defense web site)

U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). This is the Latin American area of responsibility. Unlike the State Department, however, Mexico is unassigned. The headquarters was located in Panama but has been relocated to Miami.

U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) is a relative newcomer to the Combatant Commands. It is responsible for the defense of the homeland United States.

U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). Previously a supporting command, USSOCOM has an unassigned role as a combatant command for employment as the Commander-in-Chief designates anywhere in the world.

U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM). Unique to all geostrategic regions, SPACECOM is responsible for the protection of space.

Conclusions

This failure to “organize for combat” by the Administration is a serious concern. At a minimum, we need to realign boundaries and be able to talk intelligently with interagency partners. It is time to align our diplomatic and military decision-making processes at a minimum into a more flexible coordinated and cooperative effort. Other agencies should be brought into a coordinated regional context as well.

We need to put the military COCOMS and the Foreign Bureau Chiefs in one location, a common headquarters, where they can confer face-to-face. Video teleconferencing will

not satisfy this need. Our foreign and military policy should be considered as one voice, not two disparate policies from the same government. While each combatant commander has political officers (POLADS), practice shows their value depends on individual personalities, and they are not usually considered primary members of the COCOM staffs. Likewise, there are disconnects between the political-military sections in both the State Department and the Pentagon.

If there is to be “shaping” of the national security environment, our international regional boundaries should be realigned so that they are common to both DOD and DOS. It should not matter to the State Department that the common Areas of Operations include unpopulated areas such as the North Pole or oceans. Such realignment could provide opportunities to fix problems that exist with current military boundaries such as unassigned areas of responsibility. This would also provide an opportunity to eliminate some illogical assignments such as EUCOM responsibility for Africa.

Just exactly how this reorganization and realignment takes place would be the business of Government to decide, but it appears to an outsider that the State Department boundaries make more sense than the unified command plan, both militarily and politically. But the fact is that CHANGE has occurred in the world that may make it more rational to realign these common boundaries entirely.

The suggested realignment and restructuring would put foreign policy back in the hands of the Department of State and provide the Department of Defense the foreign policy leadership that it needs on the ground, in the air, and on the seas.

Recommendations

1. Military and diplomatic boundaries be realigned to coincide with each other. These boundaries should be logical and adaptive to situational needs.
2. State Department regional bureau chiefs and organizations co-locate with the military theater Combatant Commanders.
3. Ambassadors be required to report through the regional bureaus of the State Department except under exceptional circumstances. Directions for ambassadors will be sent through the Regional Bureau Chiefs while leaving direct access open to each ambassador.
4. Regional Bureau Chiefs and theater Combatant Commanders be required to meet formally at least weekly.

Endnotes

¹ See Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, “Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations”, November 28, 2005.

² See Department of State Fact Sheet: “Transformational Diplomacy”, Office of the Spokesman, January 18, 2006.

³ U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century, “Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change” Phase III Report, February 15, 2001, (6) (document is at www.nssg.gov).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Melvin Goodman, “Shotgun Diplomacy: The Dangers of Letting the Military Control Foreign Policy”, *Washington Monthly*, December 2000, (received via Internet news service)

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