The Country Team
Restructuring America's First Line of Engagement

U.S. Ambassador meets with patrons during tour of Baghdad market

MNC-I Public Affairs (Curt Cashour)

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Since late 2006, the Institute for National Strategic Studies has assisted the Project on National Security Reform. Hosted by the Center for the Study of the Presidency, the project is a nonpartisan initiative dedicated to improving the ability of the U.S. Government to integrate all elements of national power in pursuit of national security. Toward this end, the project is conducting a study of the interagency process to support a reform agenda that would parallel the historic Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which helped to transform the American military and its world-class capability for joint warfare.

This study presents initial findings from the Project's Structure Working Group, specifically from the country-level issue team led by Robert Oakley. Ambassador Oakley's team investigated how the United States organizes itself for integrated efforts at the Embassy or *Country Team* level.[1]

Expansion of Engagement

U.S. Embassies face unprecedented challenges. The kinds of issues that confound governments today—from organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism to nuclear proliferation, human rights, ethnosectarian conflict, global disease, and climate change—no longer fit within diplomacy's traditional categories. Just as nonstate actors everywhere are becoming more powerful, regions of geostrategic importance in the developing world find themselves beset by weak or dysfunctional governments and increasingly perilous socioeconomic situations. While some might reasonably question the categorical quality of the 2002 National Security Strategy's assertion that "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones," there is still plenty of reason to be concerned about the trends.[2]

What does this mean for Embassies? First and foremost, Embassy staffs—our U.S. Country Teams—must continue to engage with allied, partner, and competitor countries, even as the terms of these engagements grow more complex. Indeed, the number of programs operated out of Embassies is expanding. A Country Team in Paris, for example, must partner with local authorities on counterterrorism, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union, as well as country-specific operations such as Afghanistan and Kosovo. The team must also further commercial interests and cooperation within regional and international financial institutions. In Moscow, the Country Team must promote democratic reform efforts while enhancing opportunities for U.S. businesses in a dynamic emerging market, as well as improve nuclear security initiatives and monitor avian flu. It must do this while working on global and regional energy problems as well as traditional diplomacy. In Abuja, Nigeria, the Country Team must monitor and help to deal with instabilities in the Niger Delta, engage in HIV/AIDS relief and economic development programs, and assist in the first civilian transfer of political power. In Bogotá, Colombia, the Country Team faces major counternarcotic and counterinsurgency problems as well as regional political problems.

All of these tasks must be coordinated and deconflicted, and the Country Team must work with unified purpose. In practice, this often does not happen. This is especially true in the area of stabilization and reconstruction missions, where the wars in Afghanistan and, more acutely, Iraq, revalidate the sacrosanct principle of unity of effort. However, this principle can be applied more broadly. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice notes, "More and more, solutions to the challenges we face lie not in the narrow expertise of one agency acting in one country, but in partnerships among multiple agencies working creatively together to solve common problems across entire regions."[3]

Despite some positive steps toward this objective, senior policymakers in and out of office in both the executive and legislative branches lament the continued inability of the United States to integrate all elements of national power. Their frustrations apply not only to the national level, but also to the Country Team, the critical intersection where plans, policies, programs, and personalities all come together. The Country Team builds the American image abroad and implements strategy. Without an effective Country Team, there can be no prospect of success in achieving national security objectives. The question is whether Country Teams are structured properly and resourced sufficiently to be effective. A brief examination of the Country Team's evolution helps dispel some common misconceptions about the answer to this question.

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Evolution of the Country Team

The struggle to gain control over unwieldy interagency activities at the country level is not of recent vintage.[4] As the United States emerged from World War II, it engaged in massive nationbuilding and foreign assistance efforts to reconstruct European states and to counter Soviet influence. To undertake this commitment, U.S. Government agencies, such as the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and Treasury, as well as the Economic Cooperation Administration, dispatched personnel overseas to accomplish U.S. objectives. With the proliferation of agencies and personnel overseas, the execution of U.S. foreign policy—heretofore led by the Department of State—became more complex.

Among the first instances in which one can find the problem of interagency coordination in the field is President Harry Truman's declaration of economic and military assistance to Greece and Turkey in 1947. Interestingly, the State Department—to which President Truman delegated authority of the programs—administered the program differently for each country. In Turkey, the U.S. Ambassador also served as the chief of the American Mission for Aid to Turkey. In Greece, however, "Dwight P. Griswold was appointed . . . to be Chief of the American Mission for Aid to Greece, and his mission was outside and independent of the embassy at Athens and of Ambassador Lincoln MacVeagh."[5] Inevitably, the Greeks observed that Griswold controlled the resources, so they bypassed the Ambassador and dealt directly with him. The Ambassador's authority diminished, and a conflict within the Embassy emerged. Rather than reconfirming the Ambassador's authority in the matter, the State Department recalled both Mr. Griswold and Ambassador MacVeagh, and then deployed a new Ambassador who also served as chief of the aid mission. This course of action revealed two longstanding Department of State tendencies: the assumption that effective diplomats can avoid such contretemps, and the default position that the Ambassador is ultimately responsible for all Embassy activities.

By 1951, with Defense Department and economic aid programs expanding overseas, President Truman saw the need to specify mechanisms for coordination at the country and regional levels. General Lucius Clay, who served as Military Governor in postwar Germany and helped create the Marshall Plan, undertook negotiations among government agencies to identify the best means to achieve coordination overseas. Along with establishing the concept of the Country Team, the resulting Memorandum of Understanding Between the Departments of State and Defense and the Economic Cooperation Administration—commonly referred to as the "Clay Paper"—concluded:

To insure the full coordination of the U.S. effort, U.S. representatives at the country level shall constitute a team under the leadership of the Ambassador. . . . The Ambassador's responsibility for coordination, general direction, and leadership shall be given renewed *emphasis, and all United States elements shall be* reindoctrinated *with respect to the Ambassador's role as senior representative for the United States in the country* [emphasis added].[6]

The Country Team concept, mentioned first in the Clay Paper, is a construct not codified in law. It is an executive measure to grant the Ambassador the means to coordinate all U.S. Government activities to maximize the effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy in the country to which he or she is assigned.

Despite the efforts of Presidents Truman and Dwight Eisenhower through Executive orders and memoranda such as the Clay Paper, interagency coordination at the country level remained elusive. Shortly after arriving in the White House, President John F. Kennedy decided to solve the problem definitively by dispatching a letter to all Ambassadors in which he outlined his expectations for the Country Team, as well as the authorities at the Ambassadors' disposal.

President Kennedy also granted Ambassadors complete authority over the composition of the Country Team, with the proviso that employees of every agency had the right to appeal to Washington if they found themselves in disagreement with the Ambassador. Additionally, President Kennedy addressed the issue of military forces engaged in military operations. In such instances, Kennedy declared that the Ambassador "should work closely with the appropriate area military commander to assure the full exchange of information." If the Ambassador felt "that activities by the United States military forces may adversely affect our over-all relations with the people or government of [country]," the Ambassador "should promptly discuss the matter with the military commander and, if necessary, request a decision by higher authority."[7] In contrast, to this day the military is not routinely enjoined to work with Ambassadors or to elevate differences of opinion to higher levels.

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Vignettes

Often, those investigating the problem of integrating elements of national power at the country level conclude that the authority of the Ambassador must be reinforced. However, as the brief overview of the Country Team concept illustrates, Presidents repeatedly have reasserted the Ambassador's authority, which suggests a recurring problem with the Ambassador's ability

Deputy Chief of Mission of U.S. Embassy speaks with commandant of Philippine marine corps at opening of bilateral training exercises

III Marine Expeditionary Force Combat Camera (Ricardo Morales)

to generate integrated interagency support for U.S. objectives and interests. A closer look at some historical vignettes suggests some reasons for why this is so.

Vietnam: Strategic Hamlets Program. Despite President Kennedy's intervention, agencies at the Country Team level in the Republic of South Vietnam continued to operate along their own lines of effort. The 1962 Strategic Hamlets Program in Vietnam underscored this fact. The program required U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), military advisors, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), U.S. Information Agency (USIA), and other U.S. Government personnel to deploy into the provinces of South Vietnam and work together. However, the Ambassador to Vietnam believed in allowing each agency full authority over its own programs.[8] The result was that each agency in the field pursued its own objectives without regard to the larger mission. It quickly became apparent that the civilian and military approaches to the war in Vietnam during this period were fundamentally at odds.

These two diverging approaches were not reconciled. As the military increased its use of bombs and artillery, civilian casualties mounted, thus undermining the objectives of the Strategic Hamlets Program. The program muddled along until the U.S. Government developed a new, more successful structure. Several lessons are illustrated:

- Even with high stakes, Presidential attention, and ostensibly clear lines of authority, agencies worked at cross purposes.
- It is particularly difficult to reconcile military and other agency objectives.
- The Ambassador's laissez-faire approach was ineffective, but not atypical, and in fact understandable.

Vietnam: CORDS. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson intervened to correct the persistent inability of the agencies of the U.S. Government to act in concert. He appointed the Deputy Chief of Mission in Saigon, Ambassador William Porter, to lead the pacification effort there. Likewise, President Johnson appointed a National Security Council (NSC) staff member to ensure that all agencies in Washington coordinated to provide full support to Ambassador Porter.[9] Nevertheless, the United States failed to achieve unity of effort with the assignment of two individuals; structural changes were still needed. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and military commander General William Westmoreland simply did not work closely together, nor did their staffs. The U.S. Government reorganized on multiple occasions to assert civilian control over the pacification mission, but to no avail. Finally, Robert Komer proposed a new structure—the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program—which was enacted on May 1, 1967.

CORDS successfully unified the efforts of the U.S. Government by placing the program in the Headquarters of Military Assistance Command–Vietnam (MACV). Komer was assigned as the Deputy Commander of MACV for CORDS and given the rank of Ambassador. Ambassador Komer "had status equivalent to a three-star general and ranked third in the MACV hierarchy behind Westmoreland and his military deputy, General Creighton Abrams."[10] Yet he was also under the authority and had the full support of U.S. Ambassador to Saigon Ellsworth Bunker. A combined staff of military and civilian personnel supported Ambassador Komer at Headquarters, MACV, and this structure was replicated down to the district level in all 250 districts in South Vietnam.[11]

Ironically, "subordinating civilian capabilities to the military chain of command actually realized the principle of the primacy of civil power. This unique placement gave civilian entities greater influence than they ever had before because it provided resources they did not previously have."[12] It also helped to ensure that the political objectives took precedence over those of the military. One of the key means by which civilians were able to control military activities was their newfound responsibility to write performance reports for their military colleagues.

the Country Team concept is an executive measure to grant the Ambassador the means to coordinate all U.S. Government activities

Ambassador Komer developed the concept for CORDS, but Ambassador William Colby institutionalized it in MACV and synergized its activities with Ambassador Bunker. In doing so, Ambassador Colby prevented major conflicts among civilian and military leaders that might have trickled down and complicated collaboration in the field. CORDS' successes began to mount, but not before U.S. public opinion turned decidedly against the war. Nevertheless, the case of CORDS demonstrated that:

- Formal integration mechanisms at multiple levels are necessary even with good individual leadership.
- Changing individual behaviors requires more than policy pronouncements from higher authority; it requires control of personal incentives.
- The ingrained desire for unity of purpose in military culture can be used to support interagency collaboration in the right decisionmaking structure.

Unfortunately, the lessons from CORDS were lost after the withdrawal from Vietnam, and not highlighted again until a series of limited interventions in the 1980s and 1990s.

Somalia: Operation Restore Hope. Ambassador Robert Oakley, as the Presidential Special Representative for Somalia, and Combined Joint

U.S. Navy (David Hoffman)

Navy captain briefs U.S. Ambassador to Honduras and Embassy staff

Task Force Commander Lieutenant General Robert Johnston, USMC, had a close, collaborative relationship, as did their staffs. At the time, their relationship was widely identified as a major contribution to the success of the united task force phase of the Somalia operations.[13] Since the U.S. Liaison Office was too small for a formal Country Team structure, Oakley and Johnston agreed on alternative informal coordination mechanisms. One of Johnston's senior officers attended all USIA meetings; Oakley's deputy chief of mission was Johnston's political advisor and attended all unified task force meetings; and Oakley and Johnston met at least once a day. By dint of shared past experience (for example, Vietnam and Lebanon) and a common commitment to collaboration, the critical civil-military relationships and complex issues requiring coordination were managed successfully. The question of who was senior never arose, as Oakley and Johnston identified and resolved any differences quickly. It also helped that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff informally told both that mission success depended on their working well together. This same attitude was reflected in formal communications with the Departments of State and Defense.

Later, under more trying circumstances and different leadership, civil-military collaboration deteriorated in a manner that ultimately contributed to a precipitous drop in public and congressional support, withdrawal of U.S. forces, and mission failure. The United States and United Nations tried to pursue a two-track policy of fighting and negotiating with a Somali warlord without sufficient unity of effort in either Washington or Mogadishu. Somalia and the checkered record of interagency collaboration illustrate several points:

- Informal coordination mechanisms can work well if backed by good leaders and their personal commitment.
- Senior military leader guidance in favor of civil-military collaboration is helpful.
- Without a standing system designed to reward interagency collaboration, successful interagency coordination may prove as fleeting as individual leader assignments.

Afghanistan and Iraq. In September 2003, facing a difficult transition from a counterterrorism focus to a more robust nationbuilding/counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan, President George W. Bush appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan. Khalilzad said he deployed to Afghanistan to "ensure the concerted use of all instruments of U.S. power to accelerate the defeat of the Taliban insurgency and the reconstruction of Afghanistan."[14] Khalilzad shared this view with the U.S. military commander, Lieutenant General David Barno, USA, and they were successful in integrating not only U.S. Government agencies but also international partners and nongovernmental organizations. One way that Khalilzad and Barno drove the spirit of unity of effort throughout the Country Team was by locating their offices adjacent to one another in the Embassy.

When Ambassador John Negroponte arrived in Iraq, he and General George Casey also established adjacent offices to ensure a coordinated, unified approach to U.S. policy. This was a stark change from the practice of Ambassador Paul Bremer and Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, USA, whose offices were in different buildings and who did not routinely coordinate with one another, thereby setting a poor example for the Country Team.

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Under the current Embassy structure in Baghdad:

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq (Ambassador Ryan Crocker) has full authority for the American presence in Iraq with two exceptions: 1—military and security matters which are under the authority of General Petraeus, the U.S. Commander of the Multinational Force–Iraq, and 2—staff working for international organizations. In areas where diplomacy, military, and/or security activities overlap, the Ambassador and the U.S. commander continue cooperating to provide co-equal authority *regarding what's best for America and its interests in Iraq* [emphasis added].[15]

These overviews of ongoing operations, along with the previous vignettes, illustrate several key conclusions about the state of interagency collaboration at the country level:

- Military authorities retain substantial independent freedom of action during military operations.
- Proximity, informal coordination mechanisms, and senior leader attitudes can increase the chances for successful civil-military integration but do not offer a reliable systemic solution to the problem.
- The United States has not had a structured solution for civil-military integration in irregular conflict at the country level since CORDS.

The vignettes also illustrate that coordination is difficult even when the stakes are high enough to merit use of force. Counterintuitively, some might wonder if interagency coordination is better when there are less compelling reasons for it. The answer is *no*. As the case of aid in Greece and innumerable other anecdotes could illustrate, tensions among Ambassadors and other government agencies' representatives, USAID directors, and representatives from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and other agencies are commonplace when the Ambassador tries to lead in anything other than a laissez-faire manner. This does not mean, however, that Country Teams cannot succeed in effectively integrating their efforts when they have the right leadership and focused policy support.

South Africa is a case in point. During the transition period from Apartheid (1992–1994), the U.S. Ambassador successfully built a cross-agency working group, which the political counselor chaired. USAID transferred $1 million each year to the U.S. Information Agency to fund more short-term visitor training programs; the Defense Attachés went beyond their normal roles to liaison (with Washington's permission) with the African National Congress "armed forces" leadership to facilitate integration into a national army; and the Agricultural Attaché provided invaluable feedback on the farming communities' attitudes toward the political transition. In sum, the entire team focused on the primary U.S. objective: to help see a successful, relatively peaceful transition out of Apartheid.[16] While such examples exist, the fact is that all too often, representatives from different agencies pursue their organizational interests at the expense of a broader, integrated approach for reasons that must be identified if reasonable remedies are to be found.

Enduring Problems

Interagency collaboration is a hit-or-miss proposition despite the ostensible authority of the Ambassador and the longstanding convention of the Country Team. The core problem, summed up well by the Department of State's

Overseas Presence Advisory Panel, is that "Other agencies often view the Ambassador as the Department [of State's] representative, rather than the President's. The Ambassador is left with the responsibility, but not the authority, to coordinate the activities and address the often competing needs of the mission."[17] Seeing the Ambassador as a Department of State representative who either ignores or willingly sacrifices other agency objectives in favor of State objectives legitimates other organization-centric behavior that creates major obstacles to unity of effort. These obstacles may be grouped in three overlapping categories to facilitate examination: authority, structure, and resources.

the Presidential letter to Ambassadors does not spell out the specific responsibilities of other agencies vis-à-vis the Ambassador

Diluted Authority. Ambassadors do not have adequate explicit authorities to unify the efforts of the Country Team, and their task has only grown more difficult in recent years. Not only must Ambassadors coordinate major government activities such as diplomacy, commercial relations, use of force, and intelligence activities, but they also must provide interagency coordination for numerous subspecialties within a given area. With over 30 government agencies now dispatching employees overseas, non–State Department personnel often outnumber diplomats.[18] As noted earlier, the Presidential letter to Ambassadors lays out their overarching authority but does not spell out the specific responsibilities of other agencies vis-à-vis the Ambassador. Personnel from government agencies often deploy to the Country Team without understanding that the Ambassador is the President's representative. They do not receive adequate guidance from their agencies on relationships with the Ambassador and with other agencies, nor do they receive thorough briefings on the Presidential letter and its intent. This is particularly true of personnel from the Departments of Defense, Justice, and Treasury, as well as other government agencies. In particular, Ambassadors lack the proper tools to exert their authority, such as effective control over employee performance reports.

Because the Ambassador is often not seen as the overarching national representative, agencies encourage their personnel on the Country Team to pursue their own objectives and lines of operation, without adequate consultation or coordination. Some of these agency personnel, as the late George Kennan observed, "seem to operate directly or indirectly under the authority of Washington bosses, some in the State Department, some elsewhere."[19] This state of affairs, he added, "invites . . . the foreign ambassador and ambassadorial staff stationed in Washington to take their problems directly to other departments and agencies, bypassing the State Department entirely."[20] Without an adequate voice in the performance assessment of agency leads and vice versa, there are no built-in incentives to putting the priorities of the Country Team above those of individual agencies. When rare exceptions to this general rule have been made—as in the administration of the CORDS program during Vietnam—results were positive.[21]

The White House, and to some degree the Department of State, does not pay sufficient attention to the Ambassador's authority vis-à-vis other agencies, thereby compounding the problem. In many cases, support for the Ambassador from State depends largely on the importance of the post, personal influence of the Ambassador, or critical nature of the issue, rather than on the institutional role of the Ambassador as the President's representative. The mistaken assumption is that the Ambassador and Country Team are not necessary to tee up feasible policy options for Washington. Their opinions and insights usually are not valued highly enough when it comes to designing policies and setting priorities. In addition, since Washington does not do a good job of integrating its priorities, Ambassadors lack a framework for balancing valid but competing interests. Currently, for example, counterterrorism often overwhelms other issues, no matter what the country, and "new" but important issues such as health and the environment do not receive adequate attention or recognition in Washington.

Another manifestation of the independence of other agencies in the field and a major reason the Ambassador finds it difficult to provide effective oversight is informal parallel communications. The proliferation of email and cellular phones has created new channels outside of formal communications schemes. As agency representatives bypass the Ambassador and obtain guidance directly from Washington bureaus, Ambassadors are isolated from the operations of other agencies, and the de facto autonomy of other agencies grows. Direct communications with superiors in the home agency without the Ambassador's knowledge also reinforce an informal incentive system that rewards individual agency-centric behaviors.

The increasing reliance upon contractors rather than direct-hire government personnel can lead to a serious diminution in the effectiveness, timeliness, and accountability of U.S. activities if direct Embassy oversight is not provided (for example, police training in Iraq and Afghanistan). Contractors and subcontractors are not viewed as an extension of the Country Team and, in fact, are not even counted in the mission's complement of U.S. personnel in country, except for security purposes. As a result, the Ambassador's ability to oversee the operations of these personnel while in country is largely dependent upon the funding agency's availability and commitment of direct-hire supervisory staff to the Embassy who can provide accountability to the Country Team. This problem applies to civilian and military contractors.

Deputy Chief of Mission to U.S. Embassy in Gabon and Navy officers meet with Mayor of Port Gentil, Gabon, to discuss regional maritime partnership

U.S. Navy (Anthony Dallas)

The Ambassador understandably has no authority over nongovernmental organizations or U.S. businessmen. Yet many Ambassadors ignore the opportunities these organizations and individuals present for improving and spreading U.S. influence in a more cohesive fashion. The private sector in particular is a valuable asset in promoting U.S. values and policies, but it is often ignored by the Country Team for other than commercial or security issues.

Finally, in crisis situations, such as the recent tsunami in Southeast Asia or the Pakistan earthquake, diverse ad hoc organizational structures further undermine the Ambassador's ability to coordinate activities. There is no commonly accepted and established mechanism for the Ambassador to use when multiple agencies and their personnel surge into the country. Each agency in Washington has its own offices to respond to emergencies, conflict, or failed states, and they often do so without adequate coordination. Civilian policy and civil-military coordination at the regional level is underpowered, so Ambassadors and their country-level programs cannot be coordinated across the region for greater effects. In these respects, inadequate regional and emergency decisionmaking structures compound the problems already inherent in the Embassy's organizational structure.

Antiquated Organizational Structures. The complexity and number of demands facing the Country Team often outstrip the capacity of the existing Embassy organizational structure to deal with them. The current staff structure often encourages individual agencies to go their own way rather than to strive for unity of effort, particularly in larger posts. Embassy structure tends to be built around political and economic affairs, and these traditional lenses for viewing the world insufficiently encompass U.S. policy objectives. Moreover, direct reporting to the Ambassador makes him or her a bottleneck for information exchange, which needs to occur more routinely among different agencies in the Embassy. Likewise, coordination between and among clusters of agency representatives with common or complementary programs is insufficient.

Resources. Resource deficiencies exacerbate the problems emerging from agency-centric structures and behaviors. To begin with, Washington generally does not recognize the Country Team's ideal position to allocate resources to priority programs. Washington does not provide an agreed interagency statement on overall U.S. objectives and priorities and grants its Ambassadors only limited—if any—control over resources. This leaves the Ambassador and Country Team no real opportunity to evaluate ends, ways, and means in the context of a strategy. Thus, if Country Team plans are done, they are written loosely because the lack of control over resources severely limits control over outcomes. Ambassadors simply allow each organization to pursue broad, generic objectives. Any attempt to investigate interagency resource tradeoffs would inevitably incline agencies to withhold their resources or openly defy the Ambassador's authority.

In essence, this means that the government cannot allocate funds to rank-order priorities at the country level or administer resources in an integrated manner for maximum effect. On rare occasions when resources are provided, the lack of budget authority means they cannot be redistributed when circumstances and priorities dictate. Even in emergencies, Congress places restrictions that severely hamper a unified approach to the use of operational funds by different agencies. There is no single individual or office in Washington with the requisite knowledge and authority to assist the Ambassador in managing surge resources across multiple programs, both civilian and military. State and USAID consolidated their foreign assistance programs for each country, but the programs are developed in Washington rather than initiated in the Country Teams. Even resources contained in the State Department budget are subject to so many constraints due to the cumbersome and decentralized approval process in Washington that they offer the Ambassador little flexibility.

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An additional challenge to the Country Team is that in Washington, policy is conducted in one place, while resources are located in others. This necessarily has an impact on the unity of effort of the Country Team. This problem inhibits "the synchronization of [administration and budget] with the priorities and initiatives of U.S. foreign policy. The bifurcation of policymaking and budget management within the [State Department] has rendered it administratively and financially less responsive to the changing realities of international affairs."[22] This applies equally to other agencies, and therefore compounds the difficulty of assembling the resources to implement policy objectives.

While inadequate fungible resources are a major problem, poorly managed human resources are an even greater problem, beginning with the Ambassador. The Ambassador's job is becoming much more complicated, yet Ambassadors frequently lack the skills necessary to harness all elements of national power. This is due to problems in selection as well as the absence of a career professional training program for Department of State or other civilian government agency personnel assigned abroad. Ambassadors are not necessarily trained in critical management or leadership skills, nor are they trained in planning.

The selection process for Ambassadors does not insist that individuals selected—career or noncareer—have proven track records of successful involvement in foreign affairs, or management experience, nor does it require prior experience of service abroad with a proven track record of effectively representing U.S. interests. The process also often ignores language and cultural skills. Appointees do not receive adequate training to compensate for these lacunae. The same care is often lacking in the selection and training of agency heads.

Obtaining trained personnel to support the Country Team is also a problem. In the special case of postconflict stabilization, the State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization is making an effort to develop a roster of capable civilian personnel. President Bush also has called for a Civilian Reserve Corps. This is meant to compensate partially for an inadequate number of permanent employees. Incentives provided for personnel from some civilian agencies—including the State Department—for deployment abroad are not nearly sufficient in relation to need, and the inability of agencies to compel nonmilitary employees to accept certain assignments or to be called up and assigned on a timely basis for a long enough period to learn to do the job remains a major problem. At one point in Afghanistan, the Country Team had only a single representative responsible for a program involving hundreds of millions of dollars, hundreds of civilian contract personnel, and hundreds of U.S. military personnel. It was almost totally reliant on contractors, who had little or no supervision.

Even when the Country Team is composed of highly qualified personnel, security restrictions on the movement of civilian personnel are a severe obstacle to their effectiveness in the field. State Department and other U.S. Government personnel are not trained to operate in semipermissive environments. Ambassadors, understandably, are cautious because they are held accountable for the safety of personnel. More often, however, Washington will dictate policies that restrict

freedom of movement for Embassy personnel when security threats are high.

Restructuring Country Teams

Given the evolving security environment and challenges confronting our nation, it is time to revalidate the Country Team's critical role in achieving U.S. national security objectives and to rethink the concept of the Country Team as a committee working for a lead agency. Instead, the Country Team of the future must be reconfigured as a cross-functional team with an empowered national leader. The Country Team's makeover must be done holistically—to include new strategy and planning approaches, decisionmaking procedures, personnel training and incentives, and resource allocation flexibility.

Authorities. First and foremost, the White House must augment the Ambassador's de jure authority with some practical de facto authorities that will provide the means to lead the national security team in country effectively. Ambassadorial authority should be clarified and strengthened both in the Presidential letter to Ambassadors and in guidance from agencies to their representatives in country, but the Department of State also must select, train, and reward Ambassadors for asserting their authority appropriately within the new Country Team concept. In short, the Ambassador must acknowledge and strongly support all agencies, not just the Department of State. The chief of mission should work with State and other agencies to ensure that individuals and supporting personnel selected for the Country Team have the requisite expertise for success and also should have a major input in the performance evaluations of agency heads and their subordinates. Likewise, other agency personnel should be able to rate the Ambassador's performance, and the Ambassador should be held accountable for meeting the Country Team's planned objectives.

A recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) report recommends that the Ambassador have the authority "to approve all military-related programs implemented in country."[23] It is prudent that such Ambassadorial authority should go beyond purely military programs and include all agencies. However, this authority should contain a provision for appeal to Washington in the event that there is a difference of view that cannot be resolved at the Embassy level. Whereas the Ambassador and Country Team will have a better feel for country relations, the Washington level has broader perspectives on regional and global issues that may determine decisions on country policy, as well as providing a longer-term viewpoint. The SFRC report also recommends that in the case of special operations forces, there should be a memorandum of understanding with the relevant regional combatant command making clear the Ambassador's authority. This also should be implemented.

Washington should provide integrated policies and priorities for regions and individual countries and then allow more authority and operational autonomy for Ambassadors and Country Teams to pursue those objectives. At the same time, the State Department and the NSC need to ensure that all agencies support agreed policy and Country Team objectives and that the mission is provided with timely policy guidance. In most situations and for most Embassies, State Department–led interagency working groups can provide interagency oversight. For crisis situations or where there are major programs by a non-State agency (for example, Defense, Justice, or CIA), there should be an NSC-led interagency group.

U.S. Army (Jim Wilt)

Member of USAID and Director of Agriculture in Ghazni province of Afghanistan survey saplings

In some situations (conflict and immediate postconflict), there will need to be shared, but explicitly delineated, authority between the Ambassador (or Presidential special advisor) and the military (Combined Joint Task Force) commander as well as the regional combatant command. This can alternate depending on the situation. The Ambassador should have authority over not only civilian agencies but also civilian functions carried out by military forces. There should be a clear delineation of authority and an institutionalized process for dealing with nongovernmental organizations and international humanitarian aid agencies in both routine and crisis situations, by all government agencies. The same should be true for businessmen and contractors.

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Reforming Structures. The Ambassador should have the latitude to structure the Embassy to meet local circumstances and U.S. priorities. For example, in Bogotá, the high priority of counternarcotics and counterinsurgency programs would be reflected in the organizational structure. In other countries, the structure would reflect the importance of counterterrorism, military-to-military relations, or environmental and economic issues.

One option to improve Country Team effectiveness is to create two deputy chiefs of mission (DCM) in larger Embassies—one for substantive issues and one for program management. The DCM for management would be in charge of all administrative resource allocation in support of the Country Team and its policy agenda. The person need not necessarily be a State Department Foreign Service officer. The DCM for policy would perform the executive secretariat and chief of staff functions for the Ambassador, supervising the various functional components, as well as serving as the Ambassador's alter ego. There should be a small staff with deep knowledge of all agency operations and procedures to support the DCM(s). This staff would monitor all incoming and outgoing communications to ensure that they are properly distributed, that action responsibilities are clearly assigned, and that they conform to existing policy. Particularly sensitive outgoing messages should

be discussed by the agency head directly with the DCM or the Ambassador. In certain situations where there is a high degree of military participation, consideration could even be given to an Active duty military officer serving as DCM.

Concomitant with the need for two DCMs is the critical requirement to restructure the Embassy into functional components. Examples of such components could include law enforcement (to include the consular function), trade promotion/development, economic analysis, political/intelligence analysis and coordination, antiterror programs, crisis planning and response, public information/public affairs/cultural activities, and democracy promotion and social sector activities. Employees of all agencies, as appropriate, would populate each functional cluster to ensure an integrated approach. Agency participation in these components should be broad rather than restrictive. Each component would have a designated chairperson—in some cases the DCM, in others an agency head reporting to the DCM and Ambassador. This would facilitate interagency communication and coordination. To promote information sharing, a truly unified communications architecture should be created. The use of agency proprietary systems and back-channel communications should be limited.

All Defense offices and personnel should be consolidated under a single office with a designated officer in charge. Similarly, all intelligence personnel (including military) should be coordinated under a single authority. Law enforcement elements should also be collocated and coordinated.

There should be a clear delineation of responsibilities for communicating with representatives of local and other governments (Embassies) and international organizations. Any fixes of the Country Team must be complemented by changes at the regional level. There needs to be an alignment of authorities between State and Defense at the regional level. The independent authority of combatant commanders to act comes only in the context of deployed forces engaged in active hostilities under the President. Otherwise, the activities of military elements assigned to given missions fall clearly and unambiguously under the authority of the Ambassador. This must be enforced. Particularly in the case of special operations or intelligence-related military personnel, experience shows that they are most effectively employed when placed, at the direction of the Ambassador, under the delegated coordinating authority of an established mission element.

On issues of formulating and implementing regional priorities, it is critical that the State Department's cadre of regional assistant secretaries enjoy good two-way communication with Defense's five (soon to be six) regional combatant commanders, while taking steps, however, not to bypass their equivalents at the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The so-called Joint Interagency Coordination Group system in fact was intended to improve sharing of knowledge, but it has been less than adequate for unified action or for planning. The Integration Planning Cell of the proposed Interagency Management System would provide for much better interagency coordination with the combatant commands but would still be advisory in nature, if it were activated.

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The incipient new U.S. Africa Command is planned to be much more integrated on an interagency basis than any previous combatant command, with a State Department officer serving as the deputy to the military commander and similar integration at lower levels. If successful, this integration could provide a solution for routine interagency regional cooperation, including the role of the combatant command. A State Department deputy assigned to each of the combatant commanders could be dual-hatted as a deputy assistant secretary of state. There should not be a permanent regional Ambassador. However, in crisis situations, either an Ambassador or a Presidential special representative should serve as the coordinator for all U.S. Government activities.

Resources. The methods of selecting and training Ambassadors and agency heads must change. An interagency training program for Ambassadors and agency heads is required. Annual offsites for all agency heads could improve the prospects for unity of effort. Senior managers from all agencies should receive periodic ethics training to ensure that the functioning of the Embassy and their own actions are held to the highest standards.

Personnel systems must adapt to incentivize people to serve in high-risk countries. All agencies must strengthen their personnel numbers to assure effective management and coordination of grantee- and contractor-implemented programs in-country. This is particularly true with regard to USAID, which has experienced a steady decline in direct-hire numbers. There must be a reserve personnel or "surge" capacity for civilian agencies beginning with State, but including other key agencies as well. Defense and, to a lesser degree, USAID already have a surge capacity for crises. Ambassadors must be able to call upon everyone and employ all available resources in response to exigencies. In Embassies and in Washington, there needs to be routine coordination of all resources, military and civilian.

On the funding side, there must be a rationalization of existing contingency funds and capacity to act on supplementals. There should be a resource push with Congress for the appropriation of all-purpose reserve funds. Current congressional restrictions on a unified approach to the utilization of operational funds by different agencies need to be removed so the Country Team can achieve unity of effort and respond rapidly to changing local conditions.

982d Combat Camera (Robert C. Brogan)

Army captain and State Department representative meet with Iraqi Education Ministry officials about expanding teaching programs

A single officer answering to the Ambassador (normally the DCM or USAID mission director) should be responsible for coordinating the expenditure of all operational civilian funds—including for development, disaster relief, refugees, postconflict reconstruction, counternarcotics, and law enforcement programs—as well as military funds with an essentially civilian objective, such as civic assistance or capacity-building. This officer will require extensive interagency training to understand operations and procedures, including funding

for military-related education, training, and equipping programs. If there are differences of view that the Ambassador cannot resolve, personnel would appeal to Washington.

More flexibility needs to be built in at the Country Team and Washington levels for the movement of funds from one function to another and for the management of contingency funds and personnel. The chief of mission should have the authority to allocate funds from all sources for priority projects. Additionally, Ambassadors should be much more aggressive in advocating for resources for non-State agencies included in their Country Teams. The Ambassador should have the authority to terminate funds if the project is clearly failing to deliver expected results.[24]

A new approach to the Country Team plan can facilitate these changes. As called for in the new Joint State–USAID Strategic Framework and the new Strategic Planning Process, the Mission Program Plan (MPP) also would be reformulated to become interagency, emphasizing the primacy of an integrated policy planning process in which all agencies provide input and endorse the final plan, including recommendations for the amount and allocation of operational funds.

An agreed interagency policy document that clearly spells out objectives and programs should accompany the MPP. The Country Team should initiate the document with the personal approval of the Ambassador, who should be responsible for settling differences of opinion. The interagency document most likely will need to have compartmented annexes to accommodate intelligence-related functions. Although it needs to be comprehensive, there should be an effort to keep it as short as possible, focusing on objectives. The office in Washington that oversees this process should be staffed by an interagency team to ensure proper representation and coordination.

Members of the Country Team should understand that they will be judged based on personal performance in meeting the objectives of the plan and that the Ambassador/DCM will have a heavy formal input into individual performance ratings. This will mean giving much more thought to leveraging the capabilities of other agencies and being leveraged in return, in pursuit of overall mission objectives. Agency heads should be rewarded for meeting objectives when it requires investing some of their agency's resources and energy in other agency programs.

Washington should develop an agreed interagency policy document and should give priority to Country Team recommendations in deciding on resources for the field. The Country Team should review the document annually, starting with input from the Ambassador. The Ambassador and Country Team should use the interagency document to tee up the areas of policy conflict so that Washington is forced to make policy decisions.

The critical challenges to our nation's interests demand a new Country Team concept and a more effective structure capable of tackling the challenges of the 21st century. The signal mark of success for the new Country Team will be changing the way other members of the Country Team perceive the Ambassador. Instead of a Department of State representative, the future Ambassador must be, and be seen as, a national representative empowered to make tradeoffs among instruments of power and to develop clear strategies to advance U.S. national interests. Simply reasserting the Ambassador's national authority is inadequate. Instead, the Ambassador must be empowered as a team leader with authority to generate national security team outcomes and must be selected, trained, and rewarded accordingly. Undertaking these reforms and changes in the authorities and procedures for planning and resource allocation will require an enormous effort. In fact, it will require a top-down, executive-legislative partnership for reform. Given the vested interests in favor of the status quo, this will be an arduous undertaking, but the changes are long overdue. **JFQ**

NOTES

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[3] Condoleezza Rice, "Remarks on Transformational Diplomacy," Washington, DC, February 8, 2007, available at <www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2007/feb/80989.htm>.

[4] See U. Alexis Johnson, "The Country Team in Operation," speech delivered to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, November 14, 1963, available at <www.ndu.edu/library/ic4/L64-066.pdf>.

[5] See U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Security Staffing and Operations, *The Ambassador and the Problem of Coordination*, 88th Congress, September 13, 1963, 8.

[6] See extract of the Clay Paper in *The Ambassador and the Problem of Coordination*, 60–61.

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[14] As quoted in Robert Killebrew et al., "The Country Team in American Strategy" (Washington, DC: Department of State/Department of Defense, December 2006), 24.

[15] Susan B. Epstein, *U.S. Embassy in Iraq*, CRS Report for Congress (RS21867), April 3, 2007, CRS-2.

[16] The authors thank Princeton Lyman for this anecdote.

[17] See the Report of the Overseas Presence Advisory Panel, "America's Overseas Presence in the 21st Century," November 1999, 64, available at <http://ftp.fas.org/irp/threat/rpt-9911_opap.pdf>.

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[21] See Stewart.

[22] Carlucci and Brzezinski.

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