



SMA Reach-back Report

R4 Question #2: How could DoD and DoS be better postured to address regional and world conflicts to ensure a whole of government approach to identify and synchronize lines of effort in both planning and execution?

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Executive Summary

Not many experts were willing to tackle this problem of synchronizing whole of government planning and execution processes across the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of State (DoS). While there seems to be a growing acceptance that greater cooperation between DoD and DoS is essential for responding to adversaries that act like complex adaptive systems, no single governmental organ which can, through its own effort, ensure that institutionalized planning and execution cooperation occurs regularly.

In other words, there is no single individual or agency that knows how to implement a whole of government approach or that has the authority to do so, even just between the DoD and DoS, which is a fundamental problem (Serwer). Despite the promising observation that DoD and DoS are “more in alignment than anytime in the last 20 years” (Serwer), some experts passionately concluded that whole-of-government “is an empty slogan and a cruel joke” (Chow).

Both assertions are an accurate and problematic portrayal of the status quo.

This paper outlines some of the challenges facing DoD and DoS Synchronizations as well as some recommendations for what the DoD can do within its current authorities. Bureaucracies resist change, so, ultimately; our contributors suggested two additional recommendations that lie outside DoD jurisdiction and would need to be implemented out by senior US policy makers.

Obstacles to DoD and DoS Synchronization

Focusing solely here on DoD and DoS synchronization—and leaving a true whole of government approaches for another time—, the contributors list five challenges preventing closer collaboration.

1. **Giant Imbalance in Capacity:** The biggest challenge, for which there are many causes, is the “giant imbalance in capacity” between DoS and DoD (Chow, Serwer). In recent history, the US military instruments of power have been much more powerful than the civilian ones (Serwer).
2. **Decreased Funding for State:** The State Department budget is a fraction of the Defense budget. Serwer notes this imbalance is about to get worse as proposed budget cuts would take more funding away from DoS and increase funding for DoD (see also Chow).
3. **DoD Called Upon Too Late:** The DoD often does not get called in until a crisis has already developed (Chow). Waiting to collaborate with DoS until an active conflict threatens makes it even more difficult to work with DoS given the lack of communication, trust, and training between the two organizations.
4. **Operational Differences:** DoS resists formal plans for its operations (Serwer), given that due to resource constraints, human resource assets are often involved in multiple lines of effort with dynamic prioritization. This approach creates difficulties for synchronization with the DoD, which has the resources for formal planning with specific human resource assets devoted to executing those plans. DoD, as a result, often finds it difficult to know when or how to reach out for assistance and collaboration.

What Can the DoD Do?

Building off the last point, the DoD does not have the ability to fashion a whole of government framework on its own, but contributors note places where DoD can take the lead to start bridging the divide between the two organizations. They suggest two ways forward.

Option 1: Training

Serwer noted that shared DoS/DoD training would go a long way to building mutual trust, esteem, and communication between the two organizations. However, he believes this is nearly impossible in today’s environment. The best he feels the organizations can hope for is some commonality in training material.

Option 2: Start by Cooperating on One Issue: Science Diplomacy/Smart Power

Moloney and Dehgan suggest that DoD and DoS begin working together on an issue of mutual concern: water security. History has shown us that water insecurity is a major driver of conflict, particularly in the Middle East. In particular, Iran is increasingly feeling the pressures of water insecurity, which is could be potentially destabilizing to the country and the region, perhaps compelling it to act in ways unfavorable to US interests. Creating a mutual understanding of the problem and building a plan together to address it could act as a confidence building measure between the two organizations.

Option 3: Reach Out to Experts Outside the DoD

Breslin Smith notes the “national security community faces a unique hurdle in gathering insights in these areas from the academic community,” particularly from Middle East scholars. Breslin Smith notes that policy suffers as a consequence from this divide. Happily, as the successful partnership between USCENTCOM and SMA has shown over the last several months, the DoD is taking steps to reach out to experts than can provide a deep understanding of our partners and adversaries. Over 190 experts have contributed to this effort to date and there are other organizations that also bring DoD and outside experts together.

What Has to Be Done by Policy Makers?

Option 4: Combine National Defense and International Affairs Budget Functions

Breslin Smith suggests combining the National Defense (050) and International Affairs (150) budget functions to get a comprehensive understanding of how National Security funds are allocated. This was last attempted during the Reagan administration. Combining budget functions would allow one to compare all “strategic communication” or “public diplomacy” being done across the DoD and DoS. This would “help the ‘whole of government’ idea, save redundancy, and better focus our efforts,” Breslin Smith argues. This might also help minimize the funding imbalance between DoS and DoD.

Option 5: Develop a Grand Strategy

Coordination is more effective when everyone is moving in the same general direction. The first step is to understand the deep cultural, historical, economic, and political knowledge related to an issue or region of concern (Breslin Smith). The second step is to develop a strategy for addressing the issue. Strategy will not be effective with deep understanding. Only after these first two steps have been accomplished can we design a national security architecture to execute that strategy. Breslin Smith suggested convening a competitive strategy study for addressing challenges facing the USG in the Middle East along the lines of Project Solarium, which was conducted by the National War College for President Eisenhower in response to emerging threats from the Soviet Union.

Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Edward Chow, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

How could DoD and DoS be better postured to address regional and world conflicts to ensure a whole of government approach to identify and synchronize lines of effort in both planning and execution?

“Whole of government approach” is an empty slogan and cruel joke. DoS has neither existing capacity nor funding to build such capacity. DoD does not get called in until a crisis has already developed. There is no budget or organization to make “whole of government approach” work and we should stop fooling ourselves by pretending we know how to do it.

Laura Jean Palmer-Moloney, Independent Research Geographer, Sr.
Strategist for Visual Teaching Technologies, LLC &
Alex Dehgan, Conservation X Labs

Water-food-energy tension in the CENTCOM AOR is at the heart of much of the social unrest, which could lead to armed conflict.

The focus of water-relevant CENTCOM efforts has been on water availability and infrastructure in Afghanistan. However, water security is not only an adequate supply of water, but also accessibility so that everyone who needs clean water can obtain enough of it when – and where – they need it. Water security is driven by both environmental and human factors. Severe, long-term water insecurity is the norm for the people who live in the Sistan Basin, at the border of Afghanistan and Iran. For the last several hundred years people on both sides of the border have struggled to live in the face of profound water insecurity. Many strategies, both cooperative and competitive, have been pursued to meet the challenges water insecurity brings, but success has been limited. The historical record suggests that people Afghanistan and Iran can make a living, and live amicably with their neighbors, in the absence of an acute water crisis. Typically, however, when water becomes scarce, stability is lost. Likewise, when the perception that others are threatening water security arises, conflict follows.

Water in the context of national security must be considered when implementing any programs or projects related to the water-food-energy nexus. Iran is one of the driest countries in the world, with increasing probability of water scarcity due to future climate change and decreasing transboundary water resources. Downscaled climate change models predict increased temperatures and decreased precipitation for Iran. Moreover, the processes of urbanization, industrialization and the development of irrigated agriculture to support population growth have raised the demand for water, and simultaneously reduced the supply. This increased demand has drawn down Iran's aquifers. More than 90 percent of the country's renewable water resources are used in agriculture, but because of low irrigation efficiency, about 50-60% of the water used is lost during the process.

Iran could benefit from a stable Afghanistan on its border, and Afghanistan could benefit from more cordial relations with Iran, which could translate into improved regional economic, energy, and trade security. But Iran sees current Afghan stabilization and reconstruction efforts that were championed by ISAF stability operations--agricultural development and water withdrawal, diversion, and containment projects--in the middle and lower Helmand River watershed as undermining water security in its southeastern province. Generally, water-based development projects in Afghanistan must take into account the equities of Afghanistan's neighbors and the rights and obligations imposed on Afghanistan by international law, bilateral treaties, and state practice on the use of water from shared basins. There is a need for human capacity and data to negotiate water-sharing agreements for Afghanistan's watersheds; the need is immediate and immense.

Recommendation: One way to be better postured to address these issues is to adopt science diplomacy as part of a "smart power" strategy for Iran to expand scientific engagement. Science diplomacy would support a coordinated initiative with Iran that would emphasize transparency in order to preclude potential retaliation against participants. It would depoliticize scientific exchanges and build a scaffold for a new and constructive relationship between the two countries. Second, the Department of State

would make efforts to coordinate, encourage, and deepen existing scientific engagement projects from a multitude of scientific participants, including technical government-to-government exchanges. Third, such an initiative would ease restrictions on cooperative activities between U.S. and Iranian scientists. Finally, the DoS should establish an independent joint Commission to supervise Iran-US scientific activities.

[Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins School of International Studies](#)

While intellectually DoD and DoS are more in agreement on a whole of government approach than any other time I can remember in the past 20 years, there is a gigantic imbalance in the capacities and cultures of the two institutions. State persists with a “sink or swim” culture fundamentally opposed to planning, which is still honored more in the breach than the observance. It also lacks appropriate personnel and resources. That is about to get worse, not better, due to budget cuts.

Ideally, State Department officers should train with military units with which they might deploy in the future. That would vastly increase mutual esteem and communication. But it is mostly impossible today. The best that can be hoped for is some commonality in the training materials for both, though State is likely to be doing precious little training for stabilization operations in the next few years. I fear we are back to where we were 20 years ago: our military instrument is far more potent than our civilian instruments, and there is a yawning gap between them.

Janet Breslin Smith, *Crosswinds International Consulting*

As a former Senate staff member, I would first propose a practical change in budget categories. I would combine function 050 (defense) and 150 (foreign operations) for congressional consideration. There was an attempt to do this during the Reagan years, with the argument that we needed a comprehensive National Security budget to get a picture of our total effort.

Aside from the problems in committee jurisdiction in appropriations and authorizing committees, which could easily be worked out, there is a logic to this idea. Right now we have no way to compare, for example, all of the “strategic communication” or “public diplomacy” being done by each Service, each agency, each regional organization, each embassy. We have a hodgepodge of programs and messages. A unified budget presentation would help the “whole of government” idea, save redundancy, and better focus our efforts.

And State would not always get the short end of the stick.

On a deeper issue, let me make the case for grand strategy.

Let me compare how the US addressed “regional and world conflict” in the Cold War era—and how we are doing it now.

In 1947, 70 years ago, the United States faced a new regional and global threat. The Soviet Union morphed from an WWII ally to aggressive challenger. In response to this threat, we searched FIRST for a deeper understanding of the enemy—in other words we wanted to know the “Sources of Soviet Conduct”. The author of that article, George Kennan, was the first Deputy Commandant at the National War College and he brought his insights into the policy world. But most importantly, he had a deep understanding of Russian history, culture, political psychology. He knew Stalin personally and understood the rigidity of the Marxist central planning model.

Based on that KNOWLEDGE, he reasoned that the rigidities and insecurities of the Soviet system would eventually implode from within. So he developed the concept, the strategy of containment—to apply slow and constant pressure on the Soviets in order to allow these internal forces to work.

We began with cultural, historical, economic, and political knowledge, then strategy.

And we designed a national security architecture to execute that strategy—the National Security Act of 1947—the whole of government approach.

The challenge at the time was to construct: 1) an alliance structure and military might to thwart Soviet ambition and 2) an economic assistance effort to counter Marxist appeals..in Europe and later in the 3rd world. The Cold War was about: 1) and aggressive nation state. and 2) an expansionist economic ideology.

After the attacks by Islamic extremists on September 11, 2001—we began a new strategic era.

But we are confounded by it. We face not an aggressive nation state, but a movement. And we confront not an economic ideology, but a religious one.

In government, we avoided a focus on region and culture. No one had in-depth experience with Islam as a political force and no one knew Osama bin Laden as Kennan had known the Soviet Union and Stalin.

So we started this era without deep knowledge and thus without strategy.

Nevertheless we acted. We reverted to the nation state/economic model of the Cold War. We choose force and technology with the hope that we could “fix” this challenge quickly, without having to contend with Islam, culture, history. We have focused instead on our internal issues—interagency coordination, acquisition policy, social media campaigns, how to brand ourselves.

Thus with little deep understanding and without strategy, we are mired in a still ill-defined national security task 16 years later.

When General Eisenhower first became President he had little prior political experience—and he faced a policy choice, much as President Trump faces today. Many urged Ike to “push back” against the Soviet Union, take preemptive military action to assert US leadership and diminish the Soviet threat. Others urged a continuation of containment. So in 1953, Eisenhower used the National War College building for a classified competitive strategy study, which many of us know as Project Solarium. Three groups of talented military officers and foreign service experts worked for six weeks to assess the implications of key options to meet the Soviet threat: “push back”, containment, and a mid-point alternative. This was a careful, deep study of the Soviet Union and the consequences of action. All policy options were briefed to the new NSC and to Eisenhower who chose to stay with containment...with some modifications.

We need a similar Solarium Project now with regards to the Middle East and ISIS. We need to understand the crisis within Islam, within the culture of Muslim majority countries. This review must include those with experience in those countries, from the Middle East Studies Centers, and those within that faith tradition. Otherwise we are flying blind.

It is only after such a grounding in knowledge that strategy will emerge. And only after strategy can you address the tools of statecraft. Clearly DIME does not fully match this strategic challenge. This is not a issue regarding Marxism, this is not a question of information, this is not really an issue of nation state diplomacy. We keep using these terms, but they do not reflect the reality on the ground. We are watching an internal struggle within a religion and a culture that is spinning out of control.

Our political culture is deeply uncomfortable addressing religion and culture in the public policy context, even if it is the motivation for the ISIS aggression. It is hard to recommend that we add “R” and “C” to DIME.

Moreover the national security community faces a unique hurdle in gathering insights in these areas from the academic community, from middle east scholars. Political tensions within this community, especially over the Israeli Palestinian issue, overall hesitance to work with government, and a predisposition to abstract quantitative analysis, have resulted in estrangement rather than support. Policy suffers as a consequence.

National security leaders do not need be religious scholars or cultural anthropologists. But we do need an understanding of the reality on the ground. We must adjust our understanding of this era. We are not simply in a fight pitting ISIS against the US, or Islam versus the West.

We need a new premise. This is a struggle WITHIN Islam, within the culture, and among Muslims. Our strategic and organizational thinking must flow from this new premise.

BIOGRAPHIES

Edward Chow



Edward Chow, a senior fellow in the Energy and National Security Program at CSIS, is an international energy expert with more than 35 years of industry experience. He has worked in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South America, Europe, Russia, and the Caspian region. He has developed government policy and business strategy, as well as successfully negotiated complex, multibillion-dollar, international business ventures. He specializes in oil and gas investments in emerging economies. He has advised governments, international financial institutions, major oil companies, and leading multinational corporations.

Chow spent 20 years with Chevron Corporation in U.S. and overseas assignments. He was head of international external affairs at headquarters in California. He played a leading role in negotiating international commercial agreements. While he was Chevron's principal international representative in Washington, he worked closely with the White House, Capitol Hill, federal departments and agencies, foreign governments, international financial institutions, and the foreign policy community on international economic policy affecting worldwide energy investments. Between 1989 and 1991, he was based in Beijing as Chevron's country manager for China. Chow is a graduate of Ohio University with a bachelor's degree in economics and a master's degree in international affairs. He has published articles in leading academic and foreign policy journals on global energy developments, spoken on energy at international conferences, universities, and think tanks in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and appeared on major international media.

Alex Dehgan

Alex Dehgan is the CEO & co-founder of a new startup, [Conservation X Labs](#), focused on harnessing exponential technologies, open innovation, and entrepreneurship for addressing global challenges, including launching the first Grand Challenge for Conservation on Aquaculture, creating the first digital makerspace, and developing new handheld microfluidics based DNA field scanners. He is also The Chanler Innovator in Residence at Duke University (and previously served as the Inaugural Rubenstein Fellow at Duke), where he researches and lectures on technology and innovation, including through a Massive Open Online Course with Coursera, *Innovation and Design for Global Grand Challenges*.



Dr. Alex Dehgan recently served as the Chief Scientist at the U.S. Agency for International Development, with rank of Assistant Administrator, and founded and headed the Office of Science and Technology, and conceptualized and helped create the Global Development Lab, USAID's DARPA for Development. Prior to coming to USAID, Alex worked in multiple positions within the Office of the Secretary, the Office of the Science Adviser to the Secretary, and the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, at the U.S. Department of State, as well as with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. At State, Alex developed political and

science diplomacy strategies towards addressing our most challenging foreign policy issues in Iran, Iraq, and the greater Islamic world, including helping initiating the Obama Administration’s diplomatic efforts with Iran through science diplomacy working with Amb. Dennis Ross, and serving as a liaison to the late Amb. Richard Holbrooke on Iran-Afghanistan affairs.

Alex was also the founding Afghanistan Country Director for the Wildlife Conservation Society’s Afghanistan Program. Through his leadership, WCS led efforts to create Afghanistan’s first national park (and later its second), conducted the first comprehensive biological surveys of the country in 30 years, and curtailed illegal wildlife trade on US and ISAF military bases. Alex holds a Ph.D. & M.S. in Evolutionary Biology from The University of Chicago, and a J.D. from the University of California, Hastings.

Laura Jean Palmer-Moloney



Moving from her career as an established geography professor, Dr. Palmer-Moloney joined US Government service in 2009 and began her research on water in the national security context. She served in Afghanistan from 2011 to 2012 as an AFPAK Hand/ Senior Adviser on Water Management to the Commanding Generals of Regional Command Southwest. She received the USACE ERDC award for Operational Support for Water Security in recognition of her geospatial reasoning contribution to Stability Operations during her deployment. After redeploying, Dr. Palmer-Moloney

was detailed from USACE ERDC to National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) where she led the InnoVision Anticipatory Analytics Water Security research team. She currently works as an independent research scientist with her consulting company Visual Teaching Technologies.

Dr. Palmer-Moloney is a recognized Subject Matter Expert and frequently contributes to water security dialogue sponsored by the Atlantic Council, the Stimson Center, the Near East-South Asia Strategic Studies Center (NESA), Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), and the OSD Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment Office. She has authored numerous publications, including *Human-Environment Interaction and Water Complexities: Mustering Science and Policy for a Coastal Resources Management Approach to Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations* (2012, East Carolina University dissertation on-line); “Water’s role in measuring security and stability in Helmand Province, Afghanistan” *Water International*, 36 (3), 2011: 207-221; “Water as Nexus: Linking U.S. National Security to Environmental Security,” *Journal of Military Geography*, 1 (1), 2011: 52-65; (with A.O. Dehgan and M. Mirzaee) “Water Security and Scarcity: Destabilization in Western Afghanistan due to Interstate Water Conflicts,” in E. Weinthal, J.Troell, and M. Nakayama (eds.) *Water and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*, London: Taylor & Francis (2012); and (with K. U. Duckenfield) “Water Insecurity, Human Dynamics, and COIN in the Sistan Basin,” in *Socio-Cultural Dynamics and Global Security: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Human Geography in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, eds. R. Tomes and C. Tucker (US Geospatial Intelligence Foundation, in press).

She holds a BA in Anthropology, an MA in Geography, and two PhD degrees—one in curriculum and instruction with a focus in Geographic Education from the College of Education, University of Denver (1998); one in Coastal Resources Management with a focus in wetlands ecology and hydrology from East

Carolina University (2012). In 2013, Dr. Palmer-Moloney completed the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Executive Education Program on the Water Future of South Asia.

Daniel Serwer

Daniel Serwer is a Professor of the Practice of Conflict Management, director of the Conflict Management Program and a Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Also a scholar at the Middle East Institute, Daniel Serwer is the author of *Righting the Balance* (Potomac Books, November 2013), editor (with David Smock) of *Facilitating Dialogue* (USIP, 2012) and supervised preparation of *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (USIP, 2009). *Righting the Balance* focuses on how to strengthen the civilian instruments of American foreign policy to match its strong military arm. *Facilitating Dialogue* analyzes specific cases and best practices in getting people to talk to each other in conflict zones. *Guiding Principles* is the leading compilation of best practices for civilians and military in post-war state-building.



As vice president of the Centers of Innovation at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Serwer led teams working on rule of law, peacebuilding, religion, economics, media, technology, security sector governance and gender. He was also vice president for peace and stability operations at USIP, overseeing its peacebuilding work in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iraq and Sudan and serving as executive director of the Hamilton/Baker Iraq Study Group. As a minister-counselor at the U.S. Department of State, Serwer directed the European office of intelligence and research and served as U.S. special envoy and coordinator for the Bosnian Federation, mediating between Croats and Muslims and negotiating the first agreement reached at the Dayton Peace Talks; from 1990 to 1993, he was deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, leading a major diplomatic mission through the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War. Serwer is a graduate of Haverford College and earned Masters degrees at the University of Chicago and Princeton, where he also did his PhD in history.

Janet Breslin Smith



Dr. Janet Breslin-Smith travels across cultures, both bureaucratic and geostrategic. As President of Crosswinds International Consulting, she draws on her 30-year career in public service, including leadership roles in the United States Senate, the National War College, and in Saudi Arabia, where she focused on higher education and outreach to women in the Middle East. She has written and lectured on strategy and culture, macro-economics and Islam, Women, Islam and Saudi Arabia. Her article, "The Struggle to Erase Saudi Extremism" appeared in November 2015 in the *New York Times*. She is the co-author of *The National War College: A History of Strategic Thinking in Peace and War*.

Dr. Breslin-Smith a Professor of National Security Strategy for 14 years at the National War College in Washington, DC, was the first woman to Chair the

Department of National Security Strategy. She was named Outstanding Professor at the College in 2006. Prior to her academic career, she was Legislative Director for Senator Patrick J. Leahy and Deputy Staff Director of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

She resided in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 2009 through 2013, with her husband, Ambassador James Smith. Dr. Breslin-Smith developed extensive contacts with Saudi women leaders in higher education, medicine, business, banking, philanthropy, sports, and on-line entrepreneurship. She lectured at al Faisal University, the Diplomatic Studies Institute, and CellA+ women's business networks. She consulted with Saudi women members newly appointed to the Shoura Council.

Dr. Breslin-Smith earned her Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles and her undergraduate degree in International Relations from the University of Southern California.