

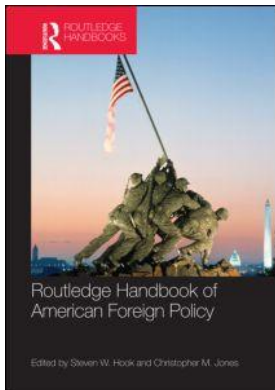
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The Department of State

Jerel Rosati and Scott DeWitt¹

The Department of State is one of the most important organizations in the executive branch involved in the making of U.S. foreign policy. It is one of four original cabinet departments created as part of the fledgling government of the United States in 1789—a founding institution as old as the Constitution itself. For more than 150 years the State Department was the lead organization responsible for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. However, its influence declined with the onset of the Cold War, containment and deterrent strategies, and presidential efforts to manage foreign policy.

Nevertheless, while the policy-making process is not solely a Department of State portfolio, the department remains an essential bureaucratic institution in foreign policy. Furthermore, key State Department officials, especially the secretary of state, have played and will continue to play consequential roles in U.S. foreign policy. A brief literature review and theoretical framework is provided to better appreciate the paradox of the decline of the Department of State, while capturing its continuing influence as an institution in terms of key official personnel such as the secretary of state. It should also illuminate why the Department of State has been understudied in comparison with other executive branch departments and agencies.

Literary Review and Theoretical Approach

Surprisingly, very little has been written about the State Department's role in the policy-making process—only a few books (e.g., Campbell 1971; Weil 1978; Bacchus 1983; Rubin 1985) and detailed articles (e.g., Scott 1969; Rockman 1981; Ayres 1983; Clarke 1987). There are some insider accounts about embassy life (e.g., Miller 1992; Dorman 2005). However, most of the scholarly literature examines the State Department as simply one of many government units involved in foreign policy (e.g., Halberstam 1969; Woodward 2004).

In other words, as an institution very little attention and study has been devoted to the Department of State within academia and the policy community. Yet, students of U.S. foreign policy must understand how the State Department bureaucracy works in order to fully appreciate its significance in the policy process. Bureaucracies, after all, actually implement governmental policies and are responsible for most governmental behavior.

A bureaucracy, public or private, consists of the following characteristics: (1) hierarchy (authority and status); (2) specialization; and (3) standardization of operating procedures.

Bureaucratic organizations are usually structured hierarchically, with divisions of authority, and responsibilities and labor specified throughout the institution. People at or near apex positions of the organization retain more authority and require more general knowledge and skill sets since they deal with large questions and the “bigger picture.” As one descends the bureaucratic hierarchy, positions become increasingly specialized and standardized with individuals having lesser degrees of authority to act independently of superiors. The specialization or compartmentalization reflects the need for routines which have established standard operating procedures (SOPs) so that units or sections of the bureaucracy can operate as succinctly and efficiently as possible. Integrated horizontally (section to section) and connected vertically (section to higher division of labor) the bureaucracy’s sub-organizations function daily in a decentralized mode. In the formulation of policy or “big picture” decisions, the bureaucracy’s sub-organizations funnel information to higher divisions of labor, in a centralized mode.

Understanding any bureaucratic organization requires a theoretical framework for examining at least four key factors: (1) historical context; (2) functions (mission or tasks); (3) organizational structure; and (4) subculture (see Figure 13.1). We focus on these core elements of the Department of State to better understand its role and evolution in the making of U.S. foreign policy, including its historic decline (e.g., Halperin 1974; Heclo 1977; Wilson 1989).

The Decline of State’s Historic Role

Historical context is important for understanding the role of a bureaucracy. For more than 150 years, until World War II, the Department of State was the major organization responsible for foreign affairs. U.S. foreign policy often evolved and was implemented by the State Department, managed by its members, and carried out by ambassadors and other State Department representatives abroad. Department of State status was reflected at the outset with the selection of Thomas Jefferson, one of the nation’s founders, as President George Washington’s secretary of state. This appointment set a precedent of selecting elite politicians and sometimes future presidents to serve as secretary of state (e.g., James Madison, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, and James Buchanan). It was and still is not uncommon for the secretary of state position to be awarded to the campaign rival who lost the primary or national election (e.g., Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, William Jennings Bryant, and Hillary Rodham Clinton). The status of the State Department is also reflected by the fact that the post carries with it the duties of “fourth in line” to the presidency. Other organizations, such as the Department of Treasury and especially the military, were involved in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, but the Department of State maintained primacy. During the twentieth century, however, power diffused to other agencies in the governmental

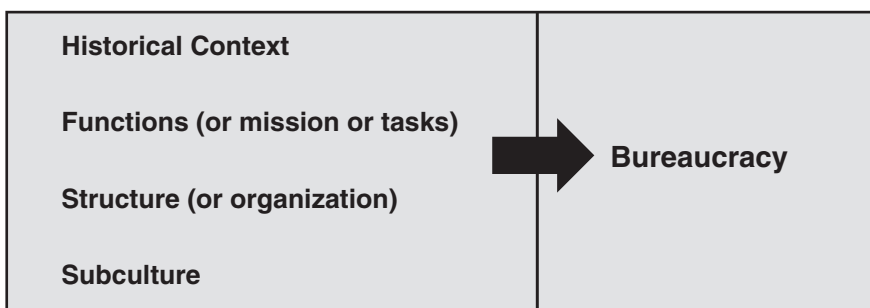


Figure 13.1 Explaining Bureaucratic Organization

bureaucracy and the White House. Thus, the Department of State has experienced a real decline in its overall influence in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

Five global and historical patterns account for the decline of the State Department's central importance in the making of U.S. foreign policy: (1) growing importance of international affairs and rise of other foreign policy bureaucracies within other U.S. agencies; (2) growing power of the United States in the world; (3) global communications advancements; (4) increased use of force as an instrument in U.S. foreign policy; and (5) increasing integration of the global economy. These broad patterns of global change set the stage for the ascent of presidential power and development of foreign policy capacity in other governmental agencies at State's expense.

First, international affairs became increasingly important for the United States during the twentieth century. From its inception and throughout the nineteenth century, the United States had the good fortune to be an insular power, surrounded by two oceans and docile neighbors—allowing the government to concentrate on internal development and continental expansion with minimal opposition. However, with World War I, the 1930s global depression, World War II, the Cold War, increasing integration and interdependence of the international political economy, and the rise of transnational and global threats such as terrorism, pandemic diseases, environmental catastrophes, events far beyond U.S. borders took center stage in the nation's affairs at home and abroad. Consequently, governmental bureaucracy has grown exponentially in size and complexity to respond to these international changes and challenges. Moreover, with the creation and expansion of the National Security Council (NSC), Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of the Treasury, and other agencies, the State Department was no longer the only organization within the executive branch with the portfolio and major responsibilities for the conduct of foreign affairs.

Second, the United States had also become the most powerful country in the history of the world by the end of World War II. Therefore, not only was the United States increasingly impacted by the international system, but U.S. foreign policy was also increasingly affecting, shaping and often driving the international system. America's growing global role as force provider and bank roller during World War II and throughout the Cold War increased presidential power in the making of foreign policy. The United States was now so powerful and the implications of its actions abroad were seen as so important, that the conduct of foreign policy could no longer be left to the Department of State. Instead, presidents now attempted to directly shape foreign policy and manage the growing foreign policy bureaucracy through a White House-centered system supported by the national security adviser and NSC staff.

The third major reason for the decline in State Department influence was the implementation of communications advancements. Before the existence of the telegraph, telephone, radio transmissions, and the airplane, it took months for American officials in different parts of the world to communicate or travel with each other via diplomatic pouch. The president was dependent on Department of State and its members located abroad to officially represent the U.S. government. Consequently, U.S. ambassadors and other State Department employees had wide latitude in influencing negotiating positions or other important aspects of U.S. foreign policy. Today, changes in technology and the development of instant communications allow the president to become less dependent on Department of State in the day-to-day management of foreign policy (Dizard 2001).

A fourth reason for the State Department's fall from its leading position in the policy making process has been U.S. propensity to apply the instrument of force in U.S. foreign policy. Escalating tensions during the Cold War focused U.S. foreign policy on the need to contain the threat of Soviet communism throughout the globe. Containment and subsequent deterrence stratagems resulted in the expansion of U.S. military capabilities, including

nuclear weapons, a large standing conventional military force, counterinsurgency forces, and clandestine operations. This trend brought simultaneous increases in the capacities of the Pentagon and the CIA, and presidential use of these organizations as a means of conducting U.S. foreign policy. Similarly, today, the centrality of the global war on terror also contributes to the Department of State's waning influence. After 9/11, for example, it was the military and intelligence community that received most budgetary increases and new policy authority. Hence, diplomacy, a pillar of the State Department, was superseded by threats of and use of force in the post-World War II period.

Finally, as the forces of globalization accelerated, especially in recent decades, the State Department has had to contend with foreign economic bureaucracies as those agencies began playing a more central role in policy deliberation and implementation. This development has resulted in more salient foreign policy roles for treasury secretaries and other economic policy advisers and agencies. Moreover, structures for White House coordination in this issue area, such as the National Economic Council (NEC), which was first established in the Clinton administration, have also brought the State Department into contention with a diverse range of organizational rivals and their purviews.

State's Continuing Functions Over Time

Each bureaucracy develops its own set of functions over time. The Department of State, which is charged with the conduct of U.S. relations, remains oriented to fulfilling the five major responsibilities for which it was originally created, reinforcing its overall decline in the making of U.S. foreign policy (see Campbell 1971; Rubin 1985). These functions are (1) representing the government overseas, (2) presenting the views of foreigners to the U.S. government, (3) engaging in diplomacy and negotiations, (4) analyzing and reporting on events abroad, and (5) providing policy advice.

One of the most important purposes of the Department of State is representing the U.S. government overseas, usually to foreign governments. Members of the State Department who are part of the Foreign Service (known as "Foreign Service Officers," or FSOs) serve abroad predominantly in embassies (foreign capitals) and consulates (major cities). In this role, U.S. ambassadors and FSOs act in the name of the U.S. government and communicate its official foreign policy to governments and peoples across six continents. Given the relatively primitive nature of transportation and communications even fifty years ago, this was a crucial role. Today, with more U.S. governmental organizations employing and posting official representatives overseas, coupled with advanced, rapid advances in speeds and capacities of transportation and communication, this unique role of the FSO has declined in stature.

A second major Department of State purpose is to represent the views of foreigners, usually governments, to the U.S. government. FSOs interact with foreign government officials in the United States and abroad, learn their official positions on international issues, and communicate their views to other parts of the U.S. government. The fact that the State Department represents the views of a certain constituency is not unique within the bureaucracy. However, the fact that State also represents views of foreign governments, as opposed to organized domestic interests, is unique within the bureaucracy. Moreover, this reality contributes heavily to charges of "clientelism" among FSOs, who are regularly accused of weighing foreign interests and concerns over those of the United States.

The third major purpose of Department of State is to conduct diplomacy and negotiations abroad. In the past, if the president wanted to conclude a treaty or come to common understanding with an adversary or friend, he relied on ambassadors and FSOs to negotiate on behalf of the U.S. government. Communications were so slow (months prior to steamships

and telegraphs and weeks prior to telecommuting) that the president had little choice but to endow considerable authority to his ambassadors and subordinates abroad. Today, instant communications give presidents the ability to pace and control negotiations on those issues they deem most important. In addition to engaging in substantially more diplomacy themselves, such as summits, presidents have increasingly turned to special envoys and others outside State for diplomatic initiatives. For example, President Richard Nixon believed that opening relations with the People's Republic of China and concluding the first SALT treaty with the Soviet Union were too important to entrust to bureaucracy, so he relied instead on the personal diplomacy of National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger. President Barack Obama appointed former Senator George Mitchell as special envoy for the Middle East and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations (UN) Richard Holbrooke as special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Nor is it unusual for the president, or his closest advisers, to take foreign trips or to pick up the telephone and communicate directly with international leaders.

The Department of State's fourth major purpose is to analyze and report on foreign events. Most FSOs located abroad spend the bulk of their professional time analyzing events and transmitting these analyses through cables back to the State Department in Washington, D.C. Decisions and directions for implementing and representing U.S. foreign policy abroad are subsequently communicated via cable to the embassies, consulates, and missions in the field. In some ways, the "cable traffic" remains the heart and soul of the contemporary State Department—consisting of over 2.5 million cables and 25 million e-mail messages a year (Zimmerman 1997). Whereas past presidents relied to a considerable extent on reports and analyses of foreign events provided by the State Department, they now tend to rely on their own staff through the national security adviser, have a large bureaucracy at their disposal (including the U.S. intelligence community), and use mass media to remain informed about world politics.

The Department of State's final major function is to provide policy advice to the president. No departmental function has suffered more than this one. The foreign policy process tended to be State Department-centered before World War II but has become increasingly White House-centered since the 1940s. Whatever information and advice does seep up to the White House from State must work its way through the formal NSC process used by the president for managing U.S. foreign policy making. Recently, new White House-based structures for homeland security and economics have further diffused State's role and access. The president also tends to rely on a small informal circle of policy advisers, only one of which may be the secretary of state. Thus, the overall policy influence of the State Department may depend heavily on working relationships between the president and the secretary of state.

Overall, the Department of State continues to play an important role in U.S. foreign policy—this is critical to understand. But State, as an institution within the executive branch, has suffered a decline of influence from its once dominant role in the foreign policy process. Therefore, the president is less dependent upon the Department of State.

A Small, but Complex Bureaucratic Organization

In addition to historical context and functions, it is crucial to understand how a bureaucracy is structured or organized. The Department of State began in 1789 with a staff of six, a budget of \$7,961, and two diplomatic missions. By 2010, it had a budget of over \$16 billion and more than 250 diplomatic missions, with posts in almost every country and in many international organizations (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Despite an apparently expansive mission and presence, when compared to most contemporary bureaucracies within the U.S. government,

the State Department is actually relatively “small.” At the same time, State is a very “complex” organization because it facilitates a global bureaucracy and most of its FSOs are located abroad. In fact, because of its geographic scope and its particular Foreign Service subculture (discussed below), the State Department has come to operate as if it were a very large bureaucratic organization both at home and abroad—furthering its overall decline.

Of its almost 60,000 employees, there are approximately 13,500 FSOs: 6,500 FSOs and 5,000 Foreign Service Specialists at State, another 1,200 in the Foreign Service of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with the remaining 800 in other agencies (U.S. Department of State 2010). Other employees are basically support personnel: doctors, security officers, secretaries, drivers, administrative staff, and foreign nationals—all assisting the FSOs, who have primary responsibility for fulfilling the department’s major functions. Roughly two-thirds of all departmental support personnel are located near its home office in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood of Washington, D.C., and the remaining third are located abroad. For FSOs, the reverse is true; roughly one-third of FSOs are located in Washington, D.C., while the other two-thirds are located at missions abroad.

In Foggy Bottom

The Department of State shares the common elements found in any government or private sector bureaucracy: hierarchy, specialization, and standardization. There are five major hierarchical levels (appointed by the president): the secretary of state, deputy secretary of state, undersecretaries of state, assistant secretaries of state, and deputy assistant secretaries of state. The top three levels of officials are referred to as the “seventh floor principals” because their offices are on the top or seventh floor of the State Department’s headquarters building. State underwent a reorganization in 1999 so that now the secretary of state and deputy secretary of state have the support of six rather than four undersecretaries responsible for supervising one of the following broad areas: political affairs; economic, business, and agricultural affairs; arms control and international security affairs; democracy and global affairs (including the environment, human rights, and health issues); public diplomacy and public affairs; and management (including budget and personnel).

As the highest-ranking officials, the seventh-floor principals tend to be generalists and are responsible for the department’s overall conduct. Most of the specialized work of the department, however, occurs at the “bureau” level. Like most foreign policy bureaucracies, the State Department is organized into both geographic and issue-oriented bureaus. Six are geographic bureaus, often referred to as the “baronies” because of their centrality to the department’s functions: African Affairs, East Asian and Pacific Affairs, European and Eurasian Affairs (including Russia), Near Eastern Affairs, South and Central Asian Affairs, and Western Hemisphere Affairs. The bureaus are run by assistant secretaries and deputy assistant secretaries (or directors and deputy directors)—referred to as “bureau principals”—the fourth and fifth hierarchical levels in the organization.

Within a geographic bureau, the assistant secretary has one or more deputies, and the bureau’s regional focus is subdivided into single countries or small groupings of countries. Each of these country subdivisions is managed by a country director—or desk officer—who reports to one of the deputy assistant secretaries responsible for that part of the region, who, in turn, reports to the assistant secretary. Thus, the assistant secretary and the deputy assistant secretaries develop expertise and have responsibilities at the regional level. The country director within the bureau is the specialist, the expert, on the current situation in a particular country and the key link in all of the information and decisions communicated—through the cable traffic—between his superiors at home and those in the field.

Throughout the Globe

State has more than 250 diplomatic missions. About 180 of these posts are “embassy” missions in countries with which the United States maintains official diplomatic relations. The remaining hundred or so missions are “consular posts” providing various services for U.S. and foreign citizens (e.g., issuing visas, facilitating emergency evacuation, or intervening on behalf of detained U.S. persons), support the main embassy in larger metropolitan areas, and maintain other permanent missions, such as to international organizations like the UN or Organization of American States (OAS). In the few special cases where full diplomatic relations are not established, such as with Cuba, the United States is usually represented by a U.S. Liaison Office or U.S. Interests Section. The size and complexity of embassies vary enormously, all however, are organized in similar bureaucratic fashion. London, once the largest embassy with a staff approaching 300 is today eclipsed by the embassy in Iraq with nearly 1,000. Smaller embassies such as many in Africa often have staffs of only a few people.

The ambassador is the chief of mission, *the* highest representative of the United States stationed abroad, with responsibility over individuals employed by the embassy. He is assisted by the deputy chief of mission and a country team, composed of FSOs from the State Department and other governmental agencies with more specific areas of responsibility (Miller 1992; U.S. Congress, General Accounting Office 1993; Dorman 2005).

An interesting aspect of the international posture is the overseas presence of personnel from agencies other than the State Department. Until World War II, most officials stationed abroad as representatives of the U.S. government were from the State Department. This is no longer the case. The U.S. government now has over 30,000 employees abroad where Department of State personnel comprise roughly 30 percent of the total, a sizable segment but not as dominant as in past decades. Other agencies, such as USAID and the Department of Defense, have such a large presence that they may have their own facilities separate from the main embassy, although the ambassador remains the senior U.S. government “in country” official. In fact, since almost every department and agency within the executive branch is now engaged internationally and maintains representatives overseas, this state of affairs has also reinforced State’s relative decline.

The Powerful Foreign Service Subculture

Understanding the behavior and influence of a bureaucracy like the Department of State, requires examination of a fourth basic characteristic: its organizational subculture. Every organization or bureaucracy develops a subculture, or a number of them. Subculture refers to common sets of goals and norms acquired by individuals within a group or organization, such as the State Department’s FSOs. Beliefs and norms result in certain incentives and disincentives which influence individual behavior within organizations. The subculture, according to James Q. Wilson (1989: 91) in *Bureaucracy*, produces “a persistent, patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relationships within an organization. Culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual. Like human culture generally, it is passed on from one generation to the next. It changes slowly, if at all” (see also Whyte 1956; Scott 1969).

The subculture of the Foreign Service is particularly strong because of its small size—13,500 FSOs—relative to other bureaucratic organizations working internationally. New members quickly discover expectations to learn and absorb the rules and norms that pervade the organization. These rules and norms are formally communicated and enforced (e.g., dissemination of departmental guidelines for “professional” behavior or by affecting career advancement through personnel evaluations and promotions systems) and informally enforced

(e.g., through peer interaction). People quickly learn to play by the rules of the game in order to attain peer acceptance and to be professionally advanced within the organization. This environment produces conformity in individual behavior, thereby reinforcing and promoting the organizational subculture.

Identifying and describing organizational subculture is no simple task, necessarily requiring broad generalizations that oversimplify the organization's complexity and are unlikely to apply to any one individual. Despite these complications, much work has been done on the subculture of the foreign service and a strong consensus exists on its major attributes (see Rockman 1981; Rubin 1985; Clarke 1987; Crosby 1991). It is commonly argued that five key characteristics comprise the subculture of the FSO: (1) tendency to be elitist or exclusivist; (2) preference for overseas experience and to identify with foreign viewpoints; (3) emphasis on diplomacy and negotiation policy instruments; (4) tendency to be generalists; and (5) tendency to be loyal and cautious.

The Foreign Service is commonly considered an elitist or exclusivist group, which takes two forms. First, the Foreign Service is elitist in the sense that it is difficult to become an FSO; members consider themselves "the *crème de la crème*" of the government in foreign policy matters. The truth in this rests in the fact that demand to join the Foreign Service is extraordinarily high while job openings are few. The Foreign Service Officer Test is also extremely demanding. Few applicants do well and even those who score high have no guarantee that a position will become available.

The Foreign Service is also considered elitist in another sense—selective membership. Throughout most of its history, membership in the Foreign Service consisted of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) men from wealthy, urbane families who often attended Ivy League schools. In other words, the Foreign Service consisted of a very exclusive "old boy network." Entrance into the Foreign Service was based on anything but merit. Instead, entrance derived from an individual's "pedigree"—family, background, education—and connections. This exclusiveness projected an air of superiority among FSOs relative to other government employees, especially as other foreign policy bureaucracies expanded during World War II and the Cold War (Weil 1978).

Much has changed within the State Department, especially over the last 30 years. The old boy system has opened up to new entrants. Connections and pedigrees have now been replaced by a more demanding system based upon merit and the Foreign Service Officer Test. Women, minorities, and individuals who are not from the Northeast, not Protestant, not upper or upper-middle class, have become part of the Foreign Service. Nonetheless, the process of change has taken time, especially at the top of the Foreign Service.

A second characteristic of the Foreign Service subculture is that FSOs usually prefer to be stationed abroad and tend to identify with foreign viewpoints. Preference to serve abroad rather than in Washington, D.C., is rooted in the desire to reside where the action and excitement is. It is also a way to see and experience the world, often a key motivating factor among Foreign Service applicants. This global inclination is reinforced by an FSO's privileged lifestyle abroad and constant interaction with foreign elites. The preference is not only for overseas experience but also for choice assignments such as London, Paris, and Rome. This orientation is further influenced by the Foreign Service personnel system, where career advancement is based on service abroad. Postings in Washington, D.C., too often or too long hurt career opportunities. In fact, the typical career goal of a FSO is to become an ambassador, not secretary of state or another major policy-making official close to the president.

Emphasis on overseas experience and identifying with foreign viewpoints is often detrimental to the ability of FSOs to operate successfully in the foreign policy maze at home. FSOs may not be as motivated or equipped to influence policy-making processes outside the State Department. Often they are accused of allowing the interests of the countries in which

they serve to trump U.S. interests. Such behavior frequently results in labels such as “gone native,” thus other officials in the policy-making process may therefore not take an FSO’s policy positions seriously (Kaplan 1994, 2004).

The third major characteristic of the Foreign Service subculture is its emphasis on diplomacy as the principal tool of U.S. foreign policy. FSOs see themselves as “diplomats”—a lauded, honored profession in the history of world politics. The ability to engage in diplomacy and conduct negotiations is an art—mastery of which is not learned in a book but through field experience overseas (or in earlier times, it was part of an elitist subculture into which one was born). The problem with the Foreign Service’s focus on diplomacy is that, with the rise of the Cold War, the United States deemphasized the role of diplomacy as an instrument of its foreign policy. It was superseded by increased reliance on the military, economic, and cultural instruments of foreign policy—force, clandestine operations, assistance, trade, economic sanctions, cultural programs, and international broadcasting. Even with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the instruments to support U.S. global policy have multiplied where the role of diplomacy has contributed to the decline of the State Department.

Fourth, FSOs tend to be generalists. Although the Foreign Service prides itself on its diversity of foreign policy expertise, most FSOs are not specialists. This is a function of the Foreign Service personnel system where every three years a FSO is stationed in a new post abroad (with every third or fourth tour at home), often in a new region of the world. The little specialized training that does take place occurs within the Department of State and in the Foreign Service Institute. No bureaucratic incentives exist to obtain, for example, graduate degrees. The generalist emphasis, rather, is to produce well-rounded experts with wide-ranging experience and intuitive understanding, able to fulfill any foreign policy position. Those individuals who prefer to stay within a region and specialize do so at the risk of career advancement. The major exception to this pattern is a FSO who begins to gain considerable seniority; at that point an area of specialization may be carved out (Ayres 1983; Bacchus 1983).

Emphasis on the creation of well-rounded, generalist diplomats runs counter to the expansion of bureaucracy, which emphasizes the development of specialists. On the one hand, the development of personnel with general knowledge and a broader perspective allows for the integration of context and history in policy analysis, something that has eroded with the growth of specialization on top of specialization. On the other hand, FSOs are often at a disadvantage with their counterparts from other bureaucracies because they may lack detailed knowledge vital to an issue meandering through the policy process. Coupled with the other characteristics, it helps to explain why governmental politics tends to be an FSO’s weakest subject—hamstringing participation in interagency processes. This generalist orientation also generates problems of competency abroad. Postings tend to be way stations of career advancement; however, the rotation system provides little incentive for learning local languages, customary practices and cultures.

The fifth characteristic common to FSOs is their tendency to be loyal and cautious. Such loyalty is easy to understand, for most FSOs spend their adult careers within the Foreign Service and Department of State. Given the limited number of FSOs, most consistently work and interact with familiar colleagues for over fifteen or twenty years. Informal networks of relationships that build up with time are reinforced by the formal personnel process in which one’s immediate superiors regularly evaluate one’s performance. These factors help to explain why the Foreign Service subculture is so pervasive and institutional loyalty so strong.

FSOs are also known for being cautious. They are hesitant about bucking the dominant beliefs and norms of the Foreign Service, and they also often provide “low-risk” advice and are reluctant to take individual policy initiatives. As discussed earlier, the State Department, though a small bureaucracy, operates like larger ones. Before a request or decision is cabled abroad, for instance, the desk officer with primary jurisdiction must make sure it has been

approved by all other officials and bureaus interested in the issue. This need results in a cumbersome process built around compromise and consensus among the parties involved.

Such loyalties and cautiousness were inculcated in the modern history of the State Department. The Cold War ushered in fear, even paranoia, about the threat of communism. The rise of McCarthyism throughout the country and the government, especially in Congress, made FSOs, especially those focusing on Asia, politically vulnerable from charges of treasonous behavior, and thereby badly damaging departmental reputations during the 1950s (see Halberstam 1969).

In sum, this portrait of the Foreign Service subculture is not particularly complimentary. Many FSOs are likely to disagree with what they might consider to be a caricature of the Foreign Service. However, it reflects the consensus position within the foreign policy literature, and this perspective also tends to be shared by other members of the foreign policy bureaucracy, including the White House, contributing to the decline of the State Department relative to other executive branch departments and agencies.

Presidential Perceptions of the State Department

Presidents and their closest advisers have generally had a negative perception of the Department of State's performance in the last few decades. President John F. Kennedy, for example, referred to the State Department as a "bowl of jelly" (Schlesinger 1965). President Lyndon Johnson considered members of the Foreign Service to be "sissies, snobs, and lightweights who sacrificed too little and thought themselves better than their country" (Halberstam 1969). President Richard Nixon declared in the 1968 campaign that "I want a secretary of state who will join me in cleaning house in the State Department" (quoted in Halberstam 1969: 299). Condoleezza Rice's appointment as President George W. Bush's secretary of state in 2005 prompted a former adviser to note, "you can't be true to the president's foreign policy and be 'nice' to the Foreign Service" (quoted in Kaplan 2004). These negative images of and experiences in working with the State Department have contributed to presidential reliance on a White House-centered policy-making process.

From a presidential perspective, six complaints are often voiced about the State Department's performance: (1) inefficiency and slowness; (2) poor quality staff work; (3) unresponsiveness; (4) resistance to change, (5) incapable of putting its house in order; and (6) inability to lead. Although President Barack Obama's early endorsement of renewed diplomacy indicated a more positive view of career diplomats, only time will tell whether this initial goodwill turns to the more negative perceptions that have characterized most presidents since World War II.

It is often argued that the Department of State is inefficient and slow. The president and other major foreign policy officials have often found that State moves too slowly, especially if there is a pressing issue at hand. When the organization does respond, a second complaint is that the staff work is substandard, lacking coherency and interagency linkages. After issuing a National Security Study Memorandum directing the bureaucracy to provide information, analyses and policy alternatives, President Nixon's national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, was often frustrated with the work produced by the State Department officials and forced them to prepare new studies.

A third complaint is that the Department of State is unresponsive to the president. Presidents and their advisers frequently argue that State Department personnel refuse to follow orders. State is perceived as being unresponsive since FSOs are permanent members of the bureaucracy who will outlive the short political life of any president and his political appointees. Furthermore, given the Foreign Service's particular subculture, FSOs often seem

to act as if they know what is best for U.S. foreign policy. A closely related complaint often heard is that the institution resists change. Bureaucratic resistance to change is not unique to the Department of State; all bureaucracies develop patterns and policies over time, making them resistant to changes the president may want to initiate.

The fifth common complaint is that the Department of State is incapable of putting its own house in order. In other words, State has not been successful in reforming its structure and subculture to operate more efficiently, produce higher quality staff work, and become more responsive to presidential orders and initiatives in today's globalized environment. Endless studies of State Department operations have been conducted, and a number of efforts at reorganization have occurred since World War II. The net result was superficial change in the formal organizational chart while Foreign Service subculture and day-to-day bureaucratic operations of the State Department remain intact. The difficulty in changing a bureaucratic organization, from without or within, is not limited to State, although they are perceived as being among the most resistant bureaucratic organizations.

Considering these complaints, it is not surprising that presidents have found the Department of State unable to lead U.S. foreign policy. Regardless of how much presidents may want to rely on the State Department to conduct U.S. foreign policy, they find it unable to lead. This is why the roles of the national security adviser and NSC staff have grown exponentially over time to the detriment of the State Department. Indeed, reflecting on policy making, a group of NSC staffers from George W. Bush's administration observed that interagency groups chaired by State were often ineffective compared to those chaired by NSC staff (National Security Council Project 1999). In the Obama administration, NSC officials not only chair the principals and deputies committees, but all the interagency policy committees as well, including the regional committees that were usually chaired by State Department officials (Presidential Policy Directive 1, February 13, 2009).

State's "Future of Iraq Project" Ignored

Such perceptions quite naturally have serious policy-making consequences. One recent example will suffice to highlight not only the bureaucratic divisions that often stymie American foreign policy, but also the deterioration of the Department of State's influence resulting from the combination of its behavior and perceptions of it by others. Not long after the Bush administration was wrapping up its initial military campaign in Afghanistan, top foreign policy officials began to target Iraq for subsequent military operations to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Consequently, Thomas Warrick, a State Department careerist working in the Middle East bureau, headed a "Future of Iraq Project" designed to consider the issues and challenges of a post-Hussein Iraq (Rieff 2003; Fallows 2004). Wide-ranging, drawing on experts at State, USAID and other agencies, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, as well as many Iraqi exiles representing a broad range of views, the project consisted of numerous working groups on just about every aspect of the issue. Both the CIA and the Pentagon were involved. Eventually, under Warrick's direction, the many working groups of the project produced thirteen volumes—thousands of pages—of material that explored "almost everything, good and bad, that has happened in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein," but well before the US military operation ever began (Fallows 2004: 52).

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his subordinates, however, completely ignored the need for postwar planning, especially once the Defense Department was charged with the responsibility. Finally, in late January 2003, the Pentagon formed the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance just two months before the war would begin. General Jay Garner, tapped to lead the effort, immediately asked for Thomas Warrick to be named to

his team. He was turned down by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). When he requested information from the Future of Iraq Project, again, according to Garner, his superiors refused, telling him to ignore the work. Why? “The Pentagon didn’t want to touch anything connected to the Department of State” (Rieff 2003: 32).

The State Department was simply marginalized out of the policy-making loop, in large measure because its conclusions did not match those of the Pentagon’s civilian leadership. Consequently, as one observer glibly characterized it, “Donald Rumsfeld’s Defense Department ended up administering postwar Iraq but being surprised by the electricity problems, while Colin Powell’s State Department was marginalized but fully aware of it” (Drezner 2003: 2). Colin Powell was not a strong secretary of state, reinforcing negative perceptions of a weak institution. Neither did Condoleezza Rice, as national security adviser, either attempt to coordinate the interagency process or promote a stronger role for State. Instead, Rice, who should have represented the interests of the president, allowed Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld (supported by Vice President Dick Cheney) to dominate the decision-making process on Iraq. Therefore, despite serious planning for Phase IV stability operations following the invasion of Iraq by the State Department, stability operations and postwar planning under the Bush administration were “rushed”—and basically non-existent—which led to a myriad of postwar failures leading to increased instability, a rising insurgency, and a protracted Iraq War.

The Influence of the Secretary of State (and other State Officials)

Despite the decline of the Department of State as an institution, individual departmental officials have played influential roles in the making of U.S. foreign policy for the president and within the policy-making process. The distinction between the State Department as an institution and individuals within the State Department is very important to understand. Secretaries of state often act as major spokespersons for the administration in foreign policy and major advisers to the president about executive management of the foreign policy process. Lower-level State Department officials may also play important roles depending on the people involved and the issue.

Many of the people who have served as secretary of state have been consequential in the making of U.S. foreign policy. Henry Kissinger, Cyrus Vance, George Shultz, James Baker, Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright, Condoleezza Rice, and Hillary Clinton are all examples of strong and powerful secretaries of state who have enjoyed good relationships with presidents since the ascendancy of a White House-centered foreign policy system.

Strong and powerful secretaries of state, in turn, rely heavily on many officials within the State Department for information and advice in formulating policy positions. They may also opt to work with and empower the careerists within State. Hence, the decline of the State Department as an institution in the formal policy-making process has not foreclosed key members of the organization from exercising influence in that process.

However, since World War II, and especially since the Kennedy administration and the rise of White House-centered policy making, secretaries of state have faced a fundamental paradox. On the one hand, they can stress their role as adviser and spokesperson for the president, and thus preserve policy influence; on the other, they can emphasize their role as manager of the department, advocating for and relying on the resources, recommendations, and personnel of the department. Over the past five decades or so, this “inside-outside dilemma” has challenged all who have held the position.

The most recent occupants of the position nicely illustrate the dilemma. When George W. Bush nominated Colin Powell to serve as secretary of state, the outpouring of praise was instant.

Almost from the start, Powell sought to empower the department and its personnel and to rally morale among its careerists (McGeary 2001: 24–32). He also emphasized career personnel in mid-level and ambassadorial appointments and other responsibilities. Moreover, he sought to inject Department of State analyses into policy discussions. The consequence was that “State Department officials ... love Powell” (Kessler and Ricks 2004:A7; also see Jones 2006). However, in contrast to these positive views within the agency, Powell was cynically regarded as “Foreign Service Officer-in-chief” outside the department (Kaplan 2004). Consequently, Powell soon found himself on the losing end of the contest for policy influence. Not only was he not the “first among equals” in Bush’s cabinet, as some observers had predicted, but he lost repeatedly in a series of policy battles and was viewed with more than a little suspicion by other members of the Bush foreign policy team, including the vice president and the president himself (see Kitfield 2001; also Daalder and Lindsay 2003; Woodward 2004, 2007). Even as early as September 2001, Powell was being characterized in the press as the “odd man out” (McGeary 2001). Following the presidential election of 2004, Powell quietly resigned and was replaced by Condoleezza Rice.

Condoleezza Rice followed Madeleine Albright as the second woman to hold the post of secretary of state. Rice moved to the State Department from her role as national security adviser, a position she gained largely by virtue of her role as a key foreign policy adviser to George W. Bush during the 2000 presidential campaign. It did not take long for observers to note that she had appeared to “seize control over U.S. foreign policy” (Ratnesar 2005: 36). In stark contrast to Powell, however, Rice did so by relying on her extraordinarily close relationship with the president. Their relationship, clearly closer than any similar relationship since President George H.W. Bush and his secretary of state, James Baker, was so extensive that they saw “each other in weekly small-group meetings but frequently discussed policy issues in private, often over lunch or dinner. When Rice is on the road, Bush phones her at all hours” (Ratnesar 2005: 36). Other observers have characterized her as President Bush’s “alter ego” (Kaplan 2004). It is interesting that this is a relationship that Rice did not draw upon as national security adviser for coordinating the bureaucracy, but did utilize for policy influence as secretary of state (Diehl 2005; Duffy and Shannon 2005; Ratnesar 2005).

Although the jury is still out on Hillary Clinton’s approach and influence as President Obama’s secretary of state, early indicators suggest she has assumed a central role by initially attempting to walk a fine line between the two ends of the inside-outside dilemma. Clinton has drawn on her substantial political capital and skills to emerge as the president’s leading foreign policy voice. According to one recent account, she has so far managed this by deftly combining a mix of outsiders and career diplomats throughout the upper and middle levels of the department and effectively engaging in the advisory process (Keating 2009). During the first two years of the Obama administration, National Security Adviser Jim Jones stressed process as Clinton emphasized substance and aggressively championed a shift away from the confrontational, military-dominated policies of the previous administration toward greater cooperation, engagement, and diplomacy (Rothkopf 2009). She has assiduously advanced the president’s agenda as she has assumed a leading foreign policy role (Hersh 2010; Jones and Marsh 2011). Her deputy secretary of state, James Steinberg (who served as deputy national security adviser in the Clinton administration, and as a foreign policy adviser to the Obama campaign) worked closely with Deputy National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon (who served in the Clinton State Department) to improve State Department-to-White House collaboration (Rothkopf 2009). However, Hillary Clinton is not the first secretary of state who has sought to “thread the needle” on the insider-outsider dilemma, and the essential challenges of the dilemma will almost certainly confront her before she completes her time in the position.

The Future?

With the end of the Cold War, it would be logical to conclude that the Department of State will play a more prominent role in the making of U.S. foreign policy, especially with the increasing importance of diplomacy, multilateral and transnational issues beyond security, and the Obama administration's global agenda of engagement and renewal. The institution's diplomatic functions would appear to be in greater demand in a post-Cold War environment and its expertise is undeniable. Yet, it must be pointed out that the negative perceptions of the department's competency shared by political leaders, along with persistent conflicts, such as the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq Wars and the global war on terrorism, and the increasingly significant international economic challenges, suggest that the department's status is not likely to change dramatically. Why this may be the case needs to receive more treatment from scholars and practitioners.

Nevertheless, this is the conclusion of a task force commissioned by the State Department to examine its own role and needs into the future given the collapse of the Soviet Union. Entitled *State 2000: A New Model for Managing Foreign Affairs*, the study (U.S. Department of State 1992: 79–80) concluded that “this report puts a particular premium on leadership of the Department of State that is open to new ideas and that promotes a new culture in the institution. It is time to forge a new mind-set.” Yet, the report explicitly acknowledged that it will be “a difficult adaptation for an institution bound in tradition” and “there are, of course, limits to what the leadership of the department can do about the culture of the institution.” The report ended on this striking note: “The Cold War is over . . . If we cannot change now—as a nation, as a government and as an institution—when can we?” Unfortunately, most observers would say that too little has changed in the decades since the report.

Note

- 1 The views expressed in this chapter do not reflect the official position of the U.S. Army or the Department of Defense.

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