Bureaucracy in Crisis: How the State Department Responded to 9/11

Darina Shtrakhman

University of Pennsylvania, darina@sas.upenn.edu

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Abstract
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Keywords
State Department, 9/11, bureaucracy, terrorism, Al Qaeda, public diplomacy, 9/11 Commission, Social Sciences, Political Science, Kathryn Tenpas, Tenpas, Kathryn

Disciplines
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Darina A. Shtrakhman
Undergraduate Honors Thesis
Political Science
University of Pennsylvania
Advisor: Dr. Kathryn Tenpas
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To my roommate, Elizabeth Gormisky, for listening to me talk about this thesis every day for a year and humoring me by talking back.

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My generation sees September 11, 2001 as the day that changed everything. My thesis asks: what if it didn’t? What if the enormous and complex federal structure we’ve created is so large and entrenched that it resists change, even when faced with an emergency? It’s a question worth pondering again and again.
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“The nightmare of the modern state is the hugeness of the bureaucracy, and the problem is how to get coherence and design in it.” — Henry Kissinger, 1970

Chapter 1: Introduction

Each day, more than 5,000 people arrive to work in the State Department’s main building in Foggy Bottom. Harnessing this large group’s potential is paramount: the foreign policy of the United States depends on it. For decades, scholars and oversight commissions identified the bureaucratic maladies that plague the Foggy Bottom operation. On September 11, 2001, the State Department — like the rest of the country — was put to the test. The shocking and tragic events of that day called on government to rise to the occasion and respond to an international crisis. Through internal committees, congressional hearings, and the 9/11 Commission, State has been subject to numerous evaluations of its reaction to the events of September 11th. Yet many of those oversight organizations focused on the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) failures. Later, Washington’s attention turned to mobilizing the Department of Defense for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The assessments of the State Department largely fell by the wayside and did not garner as much attention as they could have. By examining State’s internal response, strategists can find areas for improvements, both within the State Department and within executive bureaucracies more broadly. From a scholarship perspective, this paper can restart an important discussion about an organization rooted in the Cold War that is now faced with transnational problems of enormous scope. The lessons of September 11th permeate every discussion in Washington, either obviously or more subtly, and studying how those lessons are applied is integral to improving their response to future crises.

This thesis will explore whether the State Department has used the lessons from 9/11 to restructure its operation, and if not, what prevented it from doing so. What kind of impetus does
it take to make this large organization change? Recent political science literature in the subfield of bureaucratic analysis focuses on domestic policy bureaucracies, not on the State Department or global threats like terrorism. This paper seeks to fill this void in the academic and policy conversation by investigating the ability of the State Department to respond to international crises. To achieve this, I examine the State Department’s response to 9/11, particularly its response to Al Qaeda’s terrorist operations. As the best-case scenario for catalyzing organizational change, 9/11 is a strong case study for revealing the insurmountable or near-insurmountable obstacles that exist in the federal system. Ten years after those horrific events, sufficient time has passed to gain perspective and critically examine the State Department’s role.

The analytical component of this thesis is divided into two sections: what the State Department and other agencies knew and did before 9/11, and then the response to 9/11. The first part provides context and demonstrates the pattern of resistance to change even after the threat of terrorism, in general, and Al Qaeda, in particular, had become apparent. This portion draws heavily on the 9/11 Commission Report, as well as the commission’s hearings and the autobiographies of relevant actors. The goal is not to place blame on the Clinton White House or Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, but rather to assess how the federal system missed the red flags regarding Al Qaeda. The second part comprises the bulk of the analysis and the evidence for the assertion that more substantial reforms are necessary. Close scrutiny reveals that while many of the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations were enacted, many of those recommendations did not pertain to State. As a result of congressional hearings and a new agenda set by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton through the 21st Century Statecraft initiative and the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, State engaged in some minor restructuring and put forth new programs. The department as a whole, however, did not undergo
dramatic changes the way it did after World War II or the Cold War. Expert interviews, an assessment of the post-9/11 changes, and an analysis of State’s budget in the 2000s shed light on why the agency’s response to the largest terrorist attack in history was unduly limited in scope.¹

¹ Active employees of the State Department cannot grant interviews without the consent and approval of the Public Affairs bureau. As such, the people interviewed for this thesis are those who previously worked for State, consulted for State in some capacity, or who currently study the operations of the State Department from an academic perspective.
Chapter 2: State’s Long History

The Department of State is the nation’s oldest federal agency. State’s history begins in 1775, when the Continental Congress chose a Committee of Secret Correspondence to negotiate with France. In 1781, Congress approved a formal plan of organization for what would become the Department of Foreign Affairs. The plan included a secretary with a $4,000 annual salary, a first under secretary, a second under secretary, two clerks, and a translator. President George Washington signed the bill on July 27, 1789, thereby creating the country’s first executive department. When several domestic tasks were assigned to the original Department of Foreign Affairs — keeping records and seals, as well as publishing acts of Congress and treaties — its name was changed to the Department of State. (Over the years, State has been responsible for tasks as varied as taking the census and management of the mint, but most of those jobs have subsequently been reassigned to domestic-focused agencies.) In 1886, Congress approved an act declaring that in the event of death, removal, or resignation of both the President and the Vice President, the next in line for succession would be the Secretary of State, which established “the primacy of the Department of State over the other departments.” The Presidential Succession Act of 1947 has since placed the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate ahead of the Secretary of State, but the Secretary of State retains symbolic primacy within the Cabinet.

Out of necessity, the State Department began expanding, though at a slow pace. In 1800, State employed a total of ten men; by 1820, it increased to fifteen. The first major reorganization occurred in 1870, when Secretary Hamilton Fish created the regional bureaus, a

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3 Ibid., p. 19.
4 Ibid., p. 20.
5 Ibid., p. 21.
process that was solidified by Secretary Philander Knox prior to World War I. At the outbreak of the Great War, the department consisted of just 210 people. Assistant Secretary of State Alvey Adee joked that he carried “the whole machinery of foreign policy under his hat.” World War I revealed the need for a substantial increase in employees, so the State Department took on more staff. By the time President Franklin Roosevelt came into office in 1932, State employed 800 people, but that still proved insufficient.

Much-needed growth took place between 1944 and 1950, primarily under the leadership of Secretaries of State Edward Stettinius, George Marshall, and Dean Acheson (these changes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5). The turning point for reforms occurred as a result of the Hoover Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government of 1947, which highlighted the burdens on the Department of State. At this point, the agency took on the form that people recognize today: it relocated to its current home in Foggy Bottom, took on the responsibility of explaining American foreign policy to both foreign and domestic audiences, and divided its several thousand employees between research and policy guidance. At this stage, State employed over 13,000 people domestically and abroad. The rapid growth and expansion of duties prompted scholars to study the operation in Foggy Bottom. Through the 1960s and 1970s, academics and think tanks began critically examining the State Department and its bureaucratic structure.

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6 Ibid.
7 Qtd. on Stuart, *American Diplomatic*, p. 21.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., p. 22-3.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

In his *Theory of Public Bureaucracy*, Harvard sociologist Donald Warwick provided an insightful critique of the State Department based on bureaucratic theory. He opened with sociologist Max Weber’s defining characteristics of a bureaucracy: hierarchical structure with top-down authority; a series of offices with assigned duties; formal rules governing behavior; and technically qualified personnel employed on a career basis. Essentially, Weber sought “a highly efficient means of harnessing individuals to organizational ends.”\(^1\) Yet Warwick’s discussion was not all theoretical; his motivation for writing the book was that “the department in the 1960s was a constant target of criticism for its rigidity and inaction.”\(^2\) Warwick cites three crucial differences between State and other agencies: (1) separation of policy formulation from administration, (2) separation of implementation from both policy formulation and administration, and (3) use of the administrative sector of one department to backstop the operations of another.\(^3\) The State Department also exists within the complex environment of the federal government, where it responds to higher authorities in Congress and the White House, clientele groups, international allies in particular debates, and adversaries.\(^4\)

Two other scholars wrote similar critiques in the early 1970s. I.M. Destler’s seminal text, *Presidents, Bureaucrats, and Foreign Policy*, criticized how the State Department has not been able to meet the president’s foreign policy needs. Francis Rourke’s *Bureaucracy and Foreign Policy* viewed the State Department through the lens of policy failures in relation to the Cold War and the Vietnam War. Taken together, these works form the backbone of bureaucratic

\(^{11}\) Ibid., p. 4-5.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 9.
\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 87.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 62.
theory as it applies to American foreign policy. Warwick’s, Destler’s, and Rourke’s criticisms all fall under the following five broad categories:

(i) Territorialism

Inevitably, a bureau will support missions or policies that allow it to display its skills. Furthermore, because no one in a large organization is quite sure what constitutes a policy or where a given policy originates, everyone involved wishes to be consulted. Even on a relatively minor issue, as many as fifteen different subunits may have to sign off on the relevant cable or memorandum. A 1966 White House staff paper explained the complicated nature of issue ownership:

The State Department is not an organization in the usual sense. It is a constellation of small power centers — some moving, some standing still, some competing, some hiding, some growing, some decaying, a few coalescing, but more breaking apart into smaller fragments which soon develop all the organs and physiology of their parents.

This led Warwick to conclude, “Beneath the formal allocation of authority in State is an intricate web of conflicts, rivalries, and alliances.” Untangling the web is crucial to enacting meaningful reforms.

(ii) Loyalties and Asymmetric Information

State Department bureaucrats all have different allegiances. Political appointees owe their job to the President and the Secretary of State. Career diplomats, by contrast, must think of their long-term trajectory within the department. For them, burning bridges within their bureau could be disadvantageous down the road. In 1968, James Thomson critiqued the State Department’s “curator mentality” — “a career orientation which makes the preservation of past policy the
primary responsibility of the bureaucrat rather than the initiation of new ideas.”¹⁹ Most significantly, bureaucrats are all privy to a varying amount of information and differing pressures: “Each must maintain the loyalty of a different group of subordinates, the respect of a different group of peers, the confidence of a different boss.”²⁰ Asymmetrical access to cables, emails, or roundtable discussions means actors come into working groups with varying amounts of information.

(iii) Hierarchical Rigidity

The aforementioned bureaucratic pressures create a specific kind of work environment. Presidential power scholar Richard Neustadt famously wrote, “Initiatives, once taken, must be followed through with imagination and flexibility, and the bureaucracy has neither.”²¹ This is not to suggest that no State Department policymakers ever construct innovative or path-breaking solutions to the problems they face. Rather, the day-to-day pressures of operating in a rigid hierarchy often unintentionally obstruct creative thinking. Bureaucrats encounter significant barriers to dissent, as they recognize how detrimental it can be to argue against one’s boss or coworker.²² (This is true not only at the State Department but in all large organizations, both in the public and private sectors.) Security rules further reinforce the hierarchy, as deliberate or accidental leaks of classified information cannot be tolerated. Warwick explains, “The combination of a heavy message volume, a high degree of centralization, and tight security procedures sets the stage for the elongation of hierarchy and the proliferation of rules.”²³

²⁰ Destler, p. 57.
²¹ Qtd. on Rourke, p. 58.
²² Destler, p. 292.
²³ Warwick, p. 123.
(iv) Inertia

Perhaps the greatest consequence of a massive organization with a strict hierarchy is bureaucratic inertia. Presidential advisor Ted Sorensen once said President John F. Kennedy “felt that [State] too often seemed to have a built-in inertia which deadened initiative and that its tendency toward excessive delay obscured determination. It spoke with too many voices and too little vigor.” On the one hand, rules and structure play an important role in ensuring employees of the federal government adhere to policies. Bureaucratic routines make employees behave in a predictable manner that suits organizational goals rather than personal inclinations. On the other hand, routines are difficult to start and then, once begun, equally difficult to stop. Habits are also tough to break. Bureaucratic inertia can turn a minor glitch into a major crisis. Key actors within the chain can also effectively veto a policy simply by doing nothing, thereby de facto exerting much more power than they were ever delegated. Internal pressures — including the discontinuity of leadership, resistance from career employees, organizational conflicts, and managerial philosophy — further impede bureaucratic change.

(v) Incomplete Control

In the past half-century, the State Department has lost its monopoly on foreign affairs. Once the leading agency within the executive branch, State now shares its powers with a number of other organizations. The National Security Act of 1947 created the CIA, the National Security Agency, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In varying ways, each of those bodies has a voice in how America conducts its foreign policy. As Rourke explains, “Bureaucrats do not wield an exclusive

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24 Qtd. on Destler, p. 155.
25 Rourke, p. 49-50.
26 Ibid., p. 60.
27 Warwick, p. 197.
or monopolistic kind of authority in foreign affairs.” Eventually, the State Department only counsels the president. As the nation’s Diplomat-in-Chief, the president chooses whether to make foreign affairs a priority and whether to adhere to State’s recommendations. President Richard Nixon, for example, famously operated outside of traditional diplomatic norms and relied on National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and his back-channel deals to pursue détente. Today, Foggy Bottom employees exist in an environment influenced by dozens of factors, including public opinion and whether the president chooses to prioritize foreign affairs. Bureaucrats are therefore never fully in control of the policies they shape.

The scholarly literature identifies one more significant trait that is unique to the State Department: the role of regional bureaus. The department is divided into regional and functional offices. The six regional bureaus — African, European and Eurasian, East Asian and Pacific, Near Eastern, South and Central Asian, and Western Hemisphere Affairs — all report up to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Each regional bureau is comprised of desk officers with local expertise about a country, and they guide the department on bilateral relationships. The functional bureaus deal with the plethora of issues that transcend borders, everything from civil rights and the environment to nuclear nonproliferation and war crimes. In theory, this means that there could be a counterterrorism officer sitting in the African Affairs bureau and an African expert in the counterterrorism office. The question then arises, which of these two people has the final say on policy?

The regional bureaus have a longer history in the department, because America has been engaging in bilateral diplomacy since the country’s founding. As State expanded in size, Secretaries of State wanted to make sure that detailed, analytical information about each country was making its way up the Foggy Bottom food chain:

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28 Rourke, p. 15.
An important feature of this establishment of offices in control of certain geographical areas and the elimination of the political advisers was its tendency to centralize policy making closer to the country desks where the expert might be expected to have a greater influence. At the same time the geographical divisions were increased in number so that where formerly there were only four such divisions, the four offices which took their place were divided into nineteen divisions, which made much greater specialization possible.”

The regional bureaus possess other advantages as well. They are often staffed by Foreign Service Officers and therefore control overseas assignments, which are the reward mechanisms in the State Department system. Career diplomats switch posts every two or three years, and each actor hopes to win the ultimate prize of an attractive assignment. Finally, the majority of ambassadors answer to regional bureaus, giving regional assistant secretaries more leverage in high-level discussions. As a result, “the functional bureaus regard their work as no less important, but suffer from second-class status.”

In a *Foreign Policy* article about State Department reform, public diplomacy scholar Matthew Armstrong advised Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to restructure the focus from countries to regions, breaking the chain of bureaus being designed primarily to oversee a network of embassies. To date, this kind of change has not been implemented, and the six regional bureaus continue to operate largely in the same way they have for decades.

Scholars note that because of structural flaws, the department may attract a disproportionate and unfair share of blame from other Washington operatives. Rourke claims government bureaucracy has become “a device by which blame for failures in policy can be shifted from political to administrative elites — from a party that can do no wrong to a bureaucracy that is often made to seem as though it can do no right.”

After his departure from public life, historian and presidential advisor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. famously held the State

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29 Stuart, p. 391.
30 Warwick, p. 33.
32 Rourke, p. 6.
Department and the CIA responsible for the Kennedy administration’s foreign policy blunders. John Kenneth Galbraith also scapegoated the bureaucratic system, linking its missteps to American involvement in the Vietnam War.\textsuperscript{33} Rourke notes that a single agency is rarely responsible for an entire administration’s success or failure in a given area.

Others prove less sympathetic than Rourke. Forty years ago, in the inaugural issue of \textit{Foreign Policy}, legendary diplomat Richard Holbrooke wrote a feature entitled, “The Machine That Fails.” As a State Department official, he explained that he lived with the consequences of the department’s structural flaws: “I feel its shortcomings with a special keenness. It is hard to decide whether to play the drama as tragedy, comedy, or simply theater of the absurd.”\textsuperscript{34} For Holbrooke, size was the biggest issue — both in the number of staff employed and, the even more serious problem, the multiplicity of chains of command:

A desk officer in State has recently calculated that while in theory he is the focal point of all Washington efforts concerning ‘his’ country, in fact there are 16 people working on the country in Washington, in different chains of command. They are receiving information directly from the Americans in the country through up to nine different channels. No one sees all the communications in every channel. Through great effort the desk officer has come to know all the other officers, but, he points out, they change regularly (himself included); someone is always out of town or sick; and most importantly, each one has his own boss, who can determine his future career; each one has his own set of priority projects and problems.\textsuperscript{35}

The consequences of growing too large, Holbrooke argued, are profound. He developed what could be termed a law of bureaucracies in crisis: “The chances of catastrophe grow as organizations grow in number and in size, and as internal communications become more time-consuming and less intelligible.”\textsuperscript{36} He concluded that the president must make reform a priority,

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
as the White House would most immediately benefit from a more streamlined foreign-policy apparatus. Yet because more urgent problems often arise, presidential advisors tend to put tedious reform projects on the back burner. As a result, Holbrooke wrote, the foreign policy structure has become dysfunctional.\textsuperscript{37} Two generations later, one could argue that this is still the case.

Though many political scientists have made valuable contributions to the field of bureaucratic theory, not much has been written on practical implications for bureaucracies in times of turmoil. In 1999, Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow updated Allison’s groundbreaking 1971 book, \textit{Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis}. The analysis seeks to explain the thirteen-day event from both a practical and a theoretical angle, drawing comparisons to other decision-making processes throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Allison critiques the notion that one individual, often the president, drives decisions in a crisis: “It obscures the persistently neglected fact of government: the ‘decision maker’ of national policy is obviously not one calculating individual but is rather a conglomerate of large organizations and political actors.”\textsuperscript{38}

Allison questions the classic Rational Actor Model, replacing it with the Organizational Behavior Model and the Governmental Politics Model. He suggests that foreign policy is like a chess game in which multiple actors move the chess pieces according to standard operating procedures and sometimes according to distinctive objectives.\textsuperscript{39} He notes that while critics are often quick to dismiss rigid routines, “their value is clearest to those who have actually had to get something done.”\textsuperscript{40} Still, procedures and plans do not necessarily provide adequate guidance in the event of a disaster: “Long-range planning tends to become institutionalized (in order to

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 152.
provide a proper gesture in that direction) and then disregarded.”

Finally, Allison agrees with Kenneth Arrow’s impossibility theorem, which contends that in groups of three or more, some people’s opinions or preferences will be distorted or even disregarded.

In the 21st century, political scientist Donald Kettl has produced the most significant work on bureaucratic crises. His two recent books, *The Next Government of the United States: Why Our Institutions Fail Us and How to Fix Them*, and *System Under Stress: Homeland Security and American Politics*, fill important gaps in recent discussions. Kettl traces the design of modern government bureaucracy to President Woodrow Wilson and the Progressive movement. The Progressives borrowed best practices from the private sector and created an operation with limited goals and sufficient means to achieve them. If the system fails, they argued, someone would “crawl inside the machine and tinker with the parts — restructure, reorganize, and reconfigure.” This leaves open the question of responsibility: who would undertake the unpleasant and often inglorious work of fixing the problems? Kettl further argues, “It is becoming increasingly hard for government to solve problems because the problems themselves confound the boundaries created to solve them. In fact, it is no longer possible to assign responsibility for any fundamental problem to a single government agency.”

Indeed, in a complex system where multiple agencies are involved in each decision, a quick fix is rarely sufficient. While the number of problems grows, the willingness to take responsibility appears to be waning. For politicians, “good management is not necessarily good politics.” Congressmen and women remain keenly aware that their next reelection bid looms on

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41 Ibid., p. 181.
42 Ibid., p. 273.
44 Ibid., p. 34.
the horizon. Tangible results in areas like defense spending, therefore, take priority over diplomacy, which can take years to bear fruit. Congress’s appreciation for results over structure can squander or derail reform efforts. Kettl’s work, though an important update to the literature of the 1970s, centers on issues of homeland security, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s response to Hurricane Katrina. His domestic policy scholarship therefore paves the way for a similar analysis of the foreign policy realm.

None of the recent literature — by Allison, Kettl, or any other political scientist — focuses specifically on the State Department and transnational threats like terrorism. However, the older literature’s conclusions still apply: territorialism, asymmetric information access, hierarchical rigidity, bureaucratic inertia, and incomplete control continue to exist at the State Department and other agencies. The literature provides a framework in which to pose the central question: what circumstances would motivate change in such a system? In this context, the subsequent section examines the warning signs that existed prior to 9/11 and why terrorist attacks in the 1990s were insufficient to trigger reforms.

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46 Ibid., p. 95.
Chapter 4: Prelude to Disaster

The road to 9/11 began long before that clear September morning. Through its interviews and investigative report, the 9/11 Commission outlined the steps that brought the United States and the world to that day. The federal government, and in particular the State Department, first started taking the threat of terrorism seriously in the 1970s. In 1972, President Nixon created the Office for Combatting Terrorism after the attacks at the Munich Olympics. However, the Iran hostage crisis of 1979-1981 “ended the State Department leadership in counterterrorism,” as the White House took the reins on this issue.\(^{47}\) Over the coming decades, different agencies would take ownership over different aspects of the terrorism threat. In the 1980s, State “continued to be dominated by regional bureaus for which terrorism was not a first-order concern.”\(^{48}\) The irony in this fact is that a wealthy Saudi man, Osama Bin Laden, founded the organization called Al Qaeda in 1988 to pursue global jihad.\(^{49}\)

The end of the Cold War shook up the foreign policy community and realigned the priorities in Washington. Terrorism could have risen to the top of the agenda, but for a variety of reasons, explained below, this was not the case. National security expenditure reductions after the Cold War resulted in budget cuts in intelligence programs from 1990 to 1996. The budget then effectively stayed flat for the remainder of the decade.\(^{50}\) At the same time, “the CIA […] needed significant change in order to get maximum effect in counterterrorism.”\(^{51}\) Intelligence on Al Qaeda would fall through the cracks or, even if taken seriously by one agency, would be ignored by another. Over the course of a decade, no central coordinator was connecting the dots.

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\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 131.


\(^{50}\) 9/11 Commission Report, p. 128.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.
(A) 1993 World Trade Center Bombing

The first shock to the system came with the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. This event seems like a lost opportunity only in hindsight. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the successful investigative and prosecutorial effort following the attack gave a false impression of American preparedness: “The trials did not bring the Bin Laden network to the attention of the public and policymakers.”52 State’s South Asia bureau grew interested in Bin Laden several years later when he moved to Afghanistan in May 1996, but the bureau did not act on this interest: “At the time, as one diplomat told us, South Asia was seen in the department and the government generally as a low priority. […] With regard to Afghanistan, another diplomat said, the United States at the time had ‘no policy.’”53

Experts and reports explained the threat of terrorism clearly in the 1990s. A 1995 National Intelligence Estimate report described terrorists as “transient groups of individuals” with “loose affiliates” who operate “outside traditional circles but have access to a worldwide network of training facilities and safe havens.”54 Policymakers, in turn, understood the threat but not the threat level: “The U.S. government took the threat seriously, but not in the sense of mustering anything like the kind of effort that would be gathered to confront an enemy of the first, second, or even third rank.”55 Structural challenges persisted within the State Department and the executive branch at large. The Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) were in charge of domestic terrorism, while the CIA and State Department dealt with terror abroad.56 Under President Bill Clinton, “the lead U.S. agencies each pursued

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52 Ibid., p. 99.
53 Ibid., p. 153.
54 Ibid., p. 471.
55 Ibid., p. 470.
56 Ibid., p. 140.
their own efforts against Bin Laden." These gaps reflect how few lessons the federal agencies gleaned from the 1993 attack.

(B) 1998 Embassy Bombings

At 10:30 a.m. on August 7, 1998, trucks armed with bombs drove up to the American embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The attack in Nairobi killed twelve Americans and 201 others. Eleven more people died in Dar es Salaam. The State Department took the attacks extremely seriously. In the years since, the department has reevaluated its diplomatic security procedures for embassies and undertaken countless new safety precautions — a significant step in the right direction. Yet in many ways, the Clinton administration’s approach to Al Qaeda did not change. Policymakers reasoned:

Even after the embassy attacks, Bin Laden had been responsible for the deaths of fewer than 50 Americans, most of them overseas. An NSC staffer working for Richard Clarke told [the 9/11 Commission] the threat was seen as one that could cause hundreds of casualties, not thousands. Even officials who acknowledge a vital threat intellectually may not be ready to act on such beliefs at great cost or at high risk.59

Furthermore, terrorism was still not a top diplomatic priority. One of the counterterrorism coordinators under Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the 9/11 Commission “his job was seen as a minor one within the department.”60

After the embassy bombings, two commissions formed: the Crowe Panel, mandated by the 1986 Diplomatic Security Act, and the Bremer Commission, which broadly sought to reevaluate federal counterterrorism policies. The Crowe Panel issued a critical report that initially resulted in few policy changes, but Navy Admiral William Crowe campaigned for further reforms. The government ultimately followed the Crowe Panel’s recommendations and

57 Ibid., p. 153.
58 Ibid., p. 95.
59 Ibid., p. 164.
60 Ibid., p. 131.
spent more than $14 billion on new embassy security in the decade following the attacks.\textsuperscript{61} The money went toward securing existing facilities, as well as building eight to ten new diplomatic buildings annually to replace old structures with insufficient security protection.\textsuperscript{62}

By contrast, the Bremer Commission’s recommendations were largely ignored. The committee, chaired by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, interviewed a wide range of government officials and think tanks fellows, from criminal investigators at the DOJ to members of the counterterrorism bureau at the State Department. Its recommendations included bolstering funding for counterterrorism efforts, vigorously targeting states that support terrorism, namely Afghanistan, and creating a comprehensive plan for interagency information and fund sharing.\textsuperscript{63} In defining the terrorist threat, the report specifically named Bin Laden and cited that the World Trade Center bombing killed six and wounded a thousand people, “but the terrorists’ goal was to topple the twin towers.”\textsuperscript{64} Experts recognized the trend toward higher casualties and the ever-increasing fanatical hatred of the United States among groups like Al Qaeda. The Bremer Commission highlighted bureaucratic obstacles and how “U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities lack the ability to prioritize, translate, and understand in a timely fashion all of the information to which they have access.”\textsuperscript{65} The concerns regarding terrorist visas and designations of foreign terrorist groups — issues that came under close scrutiny in the wake of 9/11 — are presciently detailed in the 2000 report.\textsuperscript{66} This further reinforces the notion that the federal government, both at the highest levels of the Cabinet and at the bottom of the bureaucratic chains, understood the threat and the need for reform prior to the 9/11 attacks.

\textsuperscript{61} Tama, p. 113-8.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{63} National Commission on Terrorism, p. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 17-8.
According to Richard Betts, a member of the Bremer Commission and a Council on Foreign Relations senior fellow for National Security Studies, the commission’s recommendations were largely overlooked. He explains, “They were mostly ignored, and that’s what happens with most commissions. 9/11 was an exception. With our commission, a lot of the suggestions were discussed and tossed around but nothing much happened.” Betts says this is not an uncommon phenomenon in Washington. Oftentimes, commissions are formed to “pass off a difficult or sensitive issue that politicians can’t reach agreement on,” and those disagreements then mean that a commission’s recommendations face obstacles in Congress. The default option politically is “not to act rather than to act.”

Jordan Tama, a fellow of the Truman National Security Project, studies the effectiveness of national security commissions. He attributes the Bremer Commission’s failure to several factors. First, its report came out between crises, two years after the embassy bombings, but before the U.S.S. Cole and September 11th attacks. Second, the commission’s scope was too general, aiming to recommend changes to the CIA, Defense, State, and the DOJ. Finally, the Clinton White House saw the report as biased toward the Republican agenda, which meant the recommendations never gained momentum. After 9/11, policymakers took a second look at the Bremer report and enacted some of the proposals, but this did not alter the course of history in the crucial months preceding the Twin Tower attacks.

(C) 2000 U.S.S. Cole Bombing

On October 12, 2000, in the last days of the Clinton administration, Al Qaeda struck the United States Naval destroyer U.S.S. Cole while it was refueling in a Yemini port. The attack resulted in 17 American deaths and 39 injuries. The following summer, Al Qaeda would use

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67 Richard Betts, telephone interview by author, January 27, 2011.
68 Tama, p. 129-31.
footage of the explosion in a propaganda video, mere months before 9/11. In response to the bombing, President Clinton did not issue a statement of blame: “Some of Secretary Albright’s advisers warned her at the time to be sure the evidence conclusively linked Bin Laden to the Cole before considering any response, especially a military one, because such action might inflame the Islamic world and increase support for the Taliban.” Executive agencies only offered preliminary judgments and intelligence, and as such, Bin Laden would not be publicly blamed for the Cole until after the 9/11 attacks.

In her testimony before the 9/11 Commission, Albright spoke about her decisions as Secretary of State:

Although the focus of our anti-terrorism efforts throughout 1999 and 2000 was squarely on al-Qaeda and other groups with connections to Osama bin Laden, we did not always stress this publicly. […] Our counter-terrorism experts urged us in our public statements not to single him out, build him up or refer to the vastness of his operations. As a result, when I testified before Congress and made speeches about terror, I tended to talk in general terms and minimized specific mentions of Bin Laden.

Furthermore, Secretary Albright emphasized that behind the scenes, the Clinton White House discussed retaliation but that its hands were tied: “From the time of the Africa embassy bombings until the day the Clinton administration left office, the president was prepared to order military action to capture or kill bin Laden.” She said that if President Clinton had received conclusive predictive intelligence, he would likely have issued an attack.

Speaking with the benefit of hindsight, Secretary Albright gave the 9/11 Commission a dozen different recommendations in her testimony. The first was the “comprehensive reform of all aspects of our intelligence collection and analysis activities. […] The cold war intelligence

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71 Albright.
infrastructure is ill-suited to the new terrorist threat.” Another recommendation was recognizing “that the world has changed and old threats have been replaced by new ones. Organizations such as NATO that were created to counter the aggressive designs of a monolithic and imperial superpower must be re-oriented to defeat the pernicious schemes of terrorists.”

Still, these recommendations came several years too late. The State Department did not advocate an aggressive anti-Al Qaeda policy or change its own internal structures for dealing with terrorism in the years preceding 9/11.

(D) Commissions and Reports

In 2000, the Bremer Commission submitted a report to the 105th Congress entitled, “Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism.” The report opened with a prescient quote from Thomas Schelling’s forward to the book Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision:

> Surprise, when it happens to a government, is likely to be a complicated, diffuse, bureaucratic thing. It includes neglect of responsibility but also responsibility so poorly defined or so ambiguously delegated that action gets lost. […] It includes the contingencies that occur to no one, but also those that everyone assumes somebody else is taking care of. […] Whether at Pearl Harbor or at the Berlin Wall, surprise is everything involved in a government’s (or an alliance’s) failure to anticipate effectively.

Read today, those words apply equally to the shock and surprise that overwhelmed the federal government in response to 9/11.

The Bremer Commission was one of several organizations that produced such a report calling for counterterrorism reform in the year leading up to 9/11. Another such organization was an independent task force cosponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which put out a 45-page policy memo, “State Department Reform.” The foreword reads, “The Berlin Wall fell ten years ago, and still

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 National Commission on Terrorism.
the United States is struggling to come to terms with the post-Cold War world.” The CFR-CSIS commission advocated a plan of action centered on resources for reform, in which the president would issue a mandate to “force change upon the government’s resistant bureaucracies.” Among its most relevant assessments are the following:

- “The Department of State is impaired by a professional culture that emphasizes confidentiality over public diplomacy and public affairs.”
- “Foreign policy has been undermined by ineffective interagency coordination.”

Most presciently, the report identified that the foreign policy apparatus is ill-equipped to handle complex and growing threats: “As societies abroad continue to experience radical social and economic change, they will become more unstable and at times less hospitable to Americans. And the danger posed by international terrorism is increasing.” The CFR-CSIS commission was by no means the only group to identify this problem, but its timing just months before the 9/11 attacks makes it particularly striking. To address these issues, the task force drew up a long list of recommendations to change the culture and structure of the State Department, including:

- “Transform the Department of State’s culture into one of openness and public outreach. The 21st century diplomat must be a public affairs and public diplomacy diplomat.”
- Improving relationships with Congress, particularly for the purposes of cooperation on budget. “Engaging Congress, whose support is a necessary cornerstone to the effective development and implementation of foreign policy in a democracy of checks and balances, has to be elevated to a top priority.”

Again, these recommendations came too late. Had they been implemented immediately after the embassy or U.S.S. Cole bombings, they could have improved the State Department’s response to 9/11, if not prevented the attacks entirely.

76 Ibid., p. 3.
77 Ibid., p. 9-10.
78 Ibid., p. 8.
79 Ibid., p. 20.
80 Ibid., p. 21.
(E) Transfer of Power

The final element in the prelude to disaster is the transfer of power from the Clinton administration to that of President George W. Bush in late 2000 and early 2001. For several years, the State Department attempted traditional diplomacy with Pakistan as part of its counterterrorism efforts. By the end of 1999, Under Secretary Thomas Pickering indicated that U.S.-Pakistan diplomacy and talks with the Taliban had “borne little fruit.”\(^{81}\) As Secretary Albright later explained, “We did not have a strong hand to play with the Pakistanis. Because of the sanctions required by U.S. law, we had few carrots to offer.”\(^{82}\) When President Bush came into office, his staff’s initial goal involved eliminating Al Qaeda via “a multiyear effort involving diplomacy, covert action, economic measures, law enforcement, public diplomacy, and if necessary military efforts. The State Department was to work with other governments to end all Al Qaeda sanctuaries, and also to work with the Treasury Department to disrupt terrorist financing.”\(^{83}\) Yet this strategy of traditional diplomacy ignored the reality that, from 1996 onward, such diplomacy had repeatedly failed.\(^{84}\)

Four days after he was named Secretary of State-Designate, Colin Powell asked for and received a briefing from President Clinton’s Counterterrorism Security Group. He later testified to the 9/11 Commission that the briefing focused on Al Qaeda’s “growing threat to U.S. interests and Afghanistan’s role as a safe haven. As a matter of fact, that part of the briefing got my attention.”\(^{85}\) Just a week before 9/11, Secretary Powell met with the Director General of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence to express that the country had to take immediate and

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\(^{81}\) 9/11 Commission Report, p. 175.
\(^{82}\) Ibid., p. 253.
\(^{83}\) Ibid., p. 283.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 285.
concrete steps again Al Qaeda and the Taliban. He stressed that President Bush did not simply inherit and adopt the Clinton policy: “We noted early on that the actions the previous administration had tried had not succeeded in eliminating the threat.”

At the start of President Bush’s first term, Condoleezza Rice headed the National Security Council (NSC), of which the Secretary of State is a statutory attendee. Like Secretary Powell, Rice attended briefings in early 2001 on the threats faced by the United States: “During one of our conversations, [Clinton’s National Security Advisor Sandy Berger] said something that was often repeated after 9/11: he noted that I would spend far more time dealing with terrorism than I expected. […] Not much more was said.” Both in her 9/11 Commission testimony and her subsequent memoir, National Security Advisor Rice argued that the problem in the months leading up to 9/11 was not an absence of effort, but rather a systemic weakness. No single agency combined intelligence between U.S.-based operations and foreign ones. Threat reporting pointed toward an attack on American interests abroad, not domestically. She testified that no administration or organization alone failed to prevent the terrorist attacks: “The most critical issue was the stove-piping of information among government agencies and the seam between what we knew about foreign and domestic threats.”

In large-scale operations, a person or group must take charge of connecting the intelligence and implementing a plan. George Tenet, director of the CIA from 1997 to 2004, told the 9/11 Commission that “the system was blinking red” in the months before 9/11, “yet no one working on these late leads in the summer of 2001 connected the case in his or her inbox to the threat reports agitating senior officials and being briefed to the President. […] No one looked at

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86 Ibid.
88 Ibid., p. 68-9.
89 Ibid., p. 263.
the bigger picture; no analytic work foresaw the lightning that could connect the thundercloud to
the ground."90 In the first eight months of 2001, the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence
and Research produced 79 assessments on terrorism. According to Secretary Powell’s testimony,
the intelligence was often imprecise and could not justify preemptive action. Counterterrorism
failed to become a priority for State’s regional bureaus, though National Security Advisor Rice
and Secretary Powell said the data indicated the danger was to Americans and American
facilities abroad.91 The 9/11 Commission drew a similar conclusion:

The September 11 attacks fell into the void between the foreign and domestic
threats. The foreign intelligence agencies were watching overseas, alert to foreign
threats to U.S. interests there. The domestic agencies were waiting for evidence of
a domestic threat from sleeper cells within the United States. No one was looking
for a foreign threat to domestic targets. The threat that was coming was not from
sleeper cells. It was foreign — but from foreigners who had infiltrated the United
States. A second cause of this disparity in response is that domestic agencies did
not know what to do, and no one gave them direction.92

Tenet, Powell, and Rice imply that given this structural flaw, nothing could have prevented the
Al Qaeda attacks. After 9/11, they and their respective bureaucracies could only pick up the
pieces.

91 Powell, p. 9.
Chapter 5: Impetus to Change

Systems as large and entrenched as the State Department bureaucracy need an impetus to reform, regardless of whether that comes in the form of a crisis or pressure from an outside source. This chapter concentrates on three areas of change. First, it examines State in a historical context, assessing how the agency responded to other crises in the 20th century. Then, it looks at how the government behaved and made decisions the year following 9/11, highlighting the unique role that State could have played if given the chance. The final segment assesses how the 9/11 Commission, its hearings, and its report acted as pressures on the State Department but had little success in creating change.

(A) Previous State Department Reforms

On September 12, 2001, the New York Times editorial read, “It was, in fact, one of those moments in which history splits, and we define the world as ‘before’ and ‘after.’” For the federal government in its modern form, history had split twice before: in 1945, following World War II, and in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In an effort to shed light on the post-9/11 response, this section analyzes how the State Department bureaucracy reacted to those watershed moments.

i. World War II

In the 1940s, the State Department underwent major changes as a result of three factors: bureaucrats were significantly overworked; agencies reshuffled their duties and recombined in new ways during and after World War II; and the 1947 Hoover Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government forced further reorganization across the federal government. On the eve of World War II, State staff put in 156,000 hours of unpaid overtime.

which demonstrated the need for a significant workforce expansion. This, in turn, would necessitate the creation of new offices and defined duties for the new hires to carry out. In 1943, Under Secretary Edward Stettinius led a reorganization. State Department historian Graham Stuart critiqued how these dramatic changes were implemented: “In an agency like the State Department, where international law, protocol, and diplomatic savoir-faire enter into the procedure, such a reorganization must be made slowly and by experts fully conversant with the intangibles in the conduct of foreign policy.” According to Stuart, the reorganization was executed hastily and largely in secret, without consulting key officials or allowing for criticism before changes were enacted. These flaws doomed the reorganization from the start.

When Stettinius replaced Cordell Hull as Secretary of State in December 1944, the department reorganized again to focus on simplifying economic decisions. Additionally, the changes cemented the significance of the regional bureaus: “The importance of the geographic desks in the new reorganization was emphasized by allocating two Assistant Secretaries to direct their activities, James Dunn in charge of European, Far Eastern, Near Eastern, and African Affairs, and Nelson Rockefeller in charge of American Republics Affairs.” In a burst of post-war shifts at various federal agencies, State absorbed employees from now-defunct war offices. The total number of employees at State more than doubled from 6,452 in 1945 to 13,312 by 1947. State incorporated and distributed these people into a newly established hierarchy (see Appendix 1 for an organizational chart). In an attempt to streamline information analysis in the ever-expanding department, Secretary George Marshall introduced the Policy Planning Staff in

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94 Stuart, American Diplomatic and Consular Practice, p. 22-3.
96 Ibid., p. 393.
97 Ibid., p. 402.
98 Warwick, p. 16.
1947, to be headed by famed diplomat George Kennan. The mission of the Policy Planning Staff would be to act as a think tank inside the department and give advice directly to the Secretary of State, essentially operating outside of the large, new bureaucracy. This legacy continues today. Directors of Policy Planning have included such notable foreign policy leaders as Paul Nitze, Walt Whitman Rostow, Paul Wolfowitz, Morton Halperin, Richard Haass, and Anne-Marie Slaughter.  

Still, the department fielded criticism even after the second overhaul. In November 1945, *The New York Herald Tribune* wrote, “There is a tangled legacy from all sorts of conflicting policies and personalities being administered by an equal tangle of conflicting agencies and authorities. …The United States cannot indefinitely leave its foreign policy to the accidental interplay of the brilliant amateur, the opinionated, eccentric, and the bureaucratic intriguer.”  

Stuart explained that the department still suffered from “forced expansion” and could not handle absorbing thousands of employees from old war agencies. Furthermore, he noted that investigations of the reorganization highlight the failure “to effect the close relationship necessary between political, economic, cultural, and intelligence matters,” which is integral to the formulation of a sound foreign policy. Regardless of its shortcomings, the defining trait of the 1940s changes was that incorporating new employees forced the State Department to address its structural issues head-on. Furthermore, the Hoover Commission made reorganization a national priority in a way that has not been seen since.

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100 Qtd. on Stuart, *History*, p. 436.
101 Ibid., p. 465.
ii. Post-Cold War

The end of the Cold War necessarily demanded changes to the State Department apparatus, as a bipolar world turned into a multipolar one almost overnight. Secretary of State James Baker put together a task force in 1991 to recommend appropriate changes. In December 1992, the 18-member commission released a 99-page executive summary, State 2000: A New Model for Foreign Affairs. The report contained dozens of recommendations for consolidating and restructuring the department, its bureaus, and its independent offices. President George H.W. Bush’s administration read the report but did not act on its suggestions. President Clinton came into office pledging to reorganize the nation’s foreign policy structure to respond to post-Cold War challenges. When Warren Christopher took over as Secretary of State in 1993, he succeeded in convincing Congress to pass legislation creating new, consolidated offices, such as the Bureau for Narcotics, Terrorism, and Crime, but failed to persuade the White House and Congress to increase funding for State.102 “Although the Clinton administration did make some structural and procedural changes during its first two years in office, the changes fell well short of fundamentally altering the structure, operation, or culture of the State Department.”103 The 103rd Congress was more focused on economic recovery and attention-grabbing issues like the Brady Handgun Bill and ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ than bureaucratic reform.

In November 1994, Republicans took control of both houses of Congress and promised to slash foreign aid and other diplomatic projects. The White House responded by putting Vice President Al Gore in charge of the ‘Reinventing Government’ initiative, and in 1995, he issued a call to all federal agencies to submit proposals for making their bureaucracy more efficient. Secretary Christopher responded to the request by calling for the merger of the U.S. Agency for

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103 Ibid., p. 74-80.
International Development (USAID), the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) into the State Department. The suggestion of this merger triggered an intense fight in Washington: “To increase the political heat on the White House, officials from USAID, ACDA, and USIA faxed articles and studies trumpeting the virtues of their agencies to major newspapers, and they urged their friends outside government to write letters and columns criticizing the merger.”

Vice President Gore initially responded negatively to the merger concept. In mid-February 1995, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote a *Washington Post* editorial entitled, “Christopher Is Right.” Several weeks later, Senator Helms introduced reform legislation in Congress.

Beyond the merger of the agencies, the initial bill suggested reducing half of the workforce at USAID, a quarter at USIA, and at least nine percent at the State Department. The savings sought by Republicans would thus come through personnel reductions, not program cuts. In March 1997, the House International Relations Committee introduced its own State Department bill, also calling for the merger but not the staff reductions and giving the executive branch more flexibility in implementing the changes. Congressional Democrats attempted to derail the legislation through a Senate filibuster, but Senator Helms and Senator John Kerry (D-MA) struck a compromise. Some staff would be laid off but most of the $1.7 billion in savings would come from reducing salaries and other administrative expenses, and the State Department would lose no more than 15 percent of its operating budget. Senators Helms and Kerry did not agree to eliminate any federal agencies, but the magnitude of the agreed-upon cuts would

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104 Ibid., p. 94.
105 Ibid., p. 94-5.
ultimately require this. The fight was far from over. President Clinton vetoed the State Department authorization bill, and Congress fell far short of the necessary votes to override the veto.

Thus, in the period between 1993 and 1996, the State Department did not fundamentally change despite public rhetoric in Washington about the desperate need for post-Cold War reforms. Political scientist James Lindsay attributes this absence of change to four factors: (1) bureaucratic resistance at State and the other agencies that faced cuts, (2) congressional intransigence, (3) disinterest on the part of the Clinton White House on matters of bureaucratic organization, and (4) the absence of consensus. Lindsay places much of the blame on the president himself, saying, “Of course, government reorganization is a low priority with most presidents, but Clinton’s absence from the debate is notable, given his oft-stated public pledge to reinvent government.” The White House finally took ownership over this issue by 1997 and sent a new plan to Congress for sweeping changes. The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act abolished the ACDA and USIA, reallocating their duties to the State Department, and made USAID a statutory agency whose administrator answers to the Secretary of State. The changes went into effect in 1999 — a full decade after the Berlin Wall came down.

In this case, reforms did occur, but not without a long battle and multiple delays. The Bush ’41 administration did not act on the State 2000 recommendations at all. Even though President Clinton came into office promising reforms, he did not deliver on that pledge until Republicans in Congress forced him to act. While the end of the Cold War opened a window of opportunity, change came as a result of a reform-minded leader — Secretary Christopher — and a pressurized political environment. As was the case after World War II, many of the changes at

106 Ibid., p. 96-7.
107 Ibid., p. 99-103.
108 Ibid., p. 102.
State occurred through absorption of other agencies and their functions. This would not be the case after 9/11.

(B) Immediate Aftermath of 9/11

The magnitude of the events of 9/11 created such a new, uncertain world that change seemed necessary and imminent. This was an opportunity for the government to demonstrate its capacity for leadership. In her memoir, National Security Advisor (and later Secretary of State) Rice writes that every day after September 11th felt like September 12th: “Our entire concept of what constituted security had been shaken. The governmental institutions simply didn’t exist to deal with a threat of this kind. And so in the first days and months ad hoc arrangements had to fill the void.”

In those first tense weeks, Bush, Rice, Powell, and likely many others were influenced by “formative experiences during and after the Cold War.”

According to foreign policy historian Melvyn Leffler and political scientist Jeffrey Legro, “The immediate response to 9/11 was generated by an ad hoc group dominated by officials in the Defense Department, the CIA, and the Office of the Vice President (at least insofar as Afghanistan was concerned).”

In other words, the State Department was often not at the forefront of decision-making, and intragovernmental bickering impeded integrated strategy.

In the winter of 2001-2, the Bush administration formulated a foreign policy approach comprised of intensification of counterterrorism efforts, homeland security, fighting global poverty, and Iraq. A year after 9/11, the White House rolled out the 2002 National Security Strategy, drafted by National Security Advisor Rice with Phillip Zelikow, a diplomat and

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109 Rice, p. 79.
110 Zelikow, p. 115.
112 Ibid., p. 191.
political scientist acting as an outside consultant. The document, like many reports and strategy papers before it, opened with a description of how freedom triumphed over totalitarianism in the 20th century and projected that the great struggle of the 21st century would be between freedom and violent extremism. The section entitled, “Strengthen Alliances to Defeat Global Terrorism and Work to Prevent Attacks Against Us and Our Friends,” discussed coordinating efforts with regional partners and disrupting terrorist organizations, but omitted any specific references to the State Department or its efforts. The discussion about State was relegated to the last page of the report, after the plans regarding the NSC and the Department of Defense. The report promised, “We will ensure that the Department of State receives funding sufficient to ensure the success of American diplomacy.”

Rather than painting a comprehensive, nuanced portrait of the efforts coordinated by State, the National Security Strategy simply said, “The State Department takes the lead in managing our bilateral relationships with other governments.” In a new administration focused on transnational problems like terrorism, this sidelined State by making its prescribed role no longer seem as relevant. While intelligence and defense can be used preventatively in the short term — warning the United States, for example, of an impending attack — State has a unique role to play in the fight against terrorism. Diplomacy is an instrument of public pressure. The secret work done by the intelligence community is necessary and invaluable, but diplomats can put discussions out in the open. They garner support from other governments in the region against terrorist organizations and, more importantly, undermine the support terrorist groups

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114 Ibid., p. 191.
116 Ibid., p. 5-7.
117 Ibid., p. 30-1.
118 Ibid., p. 30.
receive from local populations through savvy public diplomacy. When State’s role is seen as secondary, this hinders America’s ability to solve the terrorism issue in the long run. Curbing the problems that terrorists have with the West will require more than securing the nation’s borders or obtaining reliable intelligence.

(C) 9/11 Commission and Other Pressures on State

Scholars often suggest that large-scale government change requires a window of opportunity and external pressure, such as through a bipartisan commission, the executive branch, or Congress. This was the case with previous State Department reforms after World War II and the Cold War. In his book *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, political scientist John Kingdon argues, “Policy windows open infrequently, and do not stay open long.”

Donald Kettl, a public administration scholar, discusses the challenges of capitalizing on a policy window opened by a crisis:

Initially, everyone says, ‘This is awful, we have to make sure this never happens again.’ Everyone gets all charged up. Then ordinary life resumes, and there’s a concern that we overreacted. […] You can easily get yourself in a situation where new problems pop up, and old problems don’t seem quite so serious. Then maybe the sense of crisis doesn’t seem as great as it was. Putting all that together, there’s this combined sense about how big events shape policy.

Kettl notes that while the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations were thoughtful and well calibrated, intelligence failures surrounding the Iraq War created a distrust of the government. As a result, the commission’s recommendations may not have been taken as seriously. An absence of public pressure can often lead Congressmen and women to give up on reform projects. Furthermore, the American system resists sudden change, even when faced with an urgent matter. According to Kettl:

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120 Donald Kettl, telephone interview by author, February 8, 2012.
It’s so difficult to work within the political system. We have a system that ensures we don’t do too much too fast. What we complain about often is what our founders agreed to early on. It’s not at all surprising that we constantly wonder about effectiveness. Constraints are hardwired into the Constitution.\footnote{Ibid.}

The events of September 11\textsuperscript{th} created a major policy window on which the 9/11 Commission sought to capitalize. Reading the report reveals that the commission applied limited pressure to the State Department and thus had a limited impact on its operations.

The \textit{9/11 Commission Report} discusses State primarily in its consular capacity, as in how terrorists obtain visas and find their way into the United States. The report largely ignores State’s public outreach and diplomatic efforts. One telling sentence reads, “The most hopeful possibility seemed now to lie in diplomacy — but not diplomacy managed by the Department of State, which focused primarily on India-Pakistan nuclear tensions.”\footnote{\textit{9/11 Commission Report}, p. 159.} Several decades earlier, there existed no forms of diplomacy outside of those conducted by the State Department. Now, the Pentagon engages in its own public diplomacy, spending hundreds of millions of dollars to pay contractors to produce news and entertainment programs.\footnote{Kristin M. Lord, “The State Department, Not the Pentagon, Should Lead America's Public Diplomacy Efforts,” editorial, \textit{Christian Science Monitor}, October 29, 2008, http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2008/1029/p09s01-coop.html.}

The \textit{9/11 Commission Report} concludes by making 41 policy recommendations. None of them specifically cite State, though they do address the Pentagon, DHS, the FBI, and the CIA. The first ten recommendations deal with issues where State can play a crucial role: identifying terrorist sanctuaries; engaging Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia; and defining a counterterrorism strategy. The most relevant recommendations to State are:

(5) “The U.S. government must define what the message is, what it stands for. We should offer an example of moral leadership in the world. […] To Muslim parents, terrorists like Bin Laden have nothing to offer their children but visions of violence and death. America and its friends have a crucial advantage — we can
offer these parents a vision that might give their children a better future. If we heed the views of thoughtful leaders in the Arab and Muslim world, a moderate consensus can be found.”

(7) “Just as we did in the Cold War, we need to defend our ideals abroad vigorously. America does stand up for its values. […] The United States should rebuild the scholarship, exchange, and library programs that reach out to young people and offer them knowledge and hope. Where such assistance is provided, it should be identified as coming from the citizens of the United States.”124

In response to the 9/11 Commission Report, Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) held a hearing in the House International Relations Committee in August 2004. Rep. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) noted in his opening remarks, “Today we are here to examine and redefine the State Department’s role as the government’s main implementing agency of soft power in the war on terror. […] To win that fight, we must also win a tough battle for the hearts and minds of the Muslim world.” He outlined how the United States should go to new lengths to engage Muslim communities around the globe and recognize that this is a matter of national security. He concluded, “I hope to hear today that the State Department has heard the alarm.”125

Nine top-ranking State Department officials then testified about various goals, ranging from reforming public diplomacy strategies to creating more secure borders. The key witness was Christopher Kojm, the deputy executive director of the 9/11 Commission and the former deputy assistant secretary for intelligence policy and coordination in the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research. When asked what he would do if he were Secretary of State, Kojm emphasized the importance of having more money for public diplomacy and local aid such as fixing roads or building schools.126 Though this day of hearings on State Department reforms added some of the requisite external pressure necessary for change, Congress held far more hearings on 9/11-related intelligence failures and later the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

126 Ibid.
As with the 9/11 Commission, State was not even a secondary focus. Once again, evaluating State fell by the wayside. Intelligence failures had to take priority in the post-9/11 discussions, because had anyone connected the dots, the terrorists could have been kept out of the country and the attacks avoided. Still, intelligence alone cannot permanently resolve the terrorism problem. Without public pressure and attention from commissions, State is unlikely to gain more funding from Congress, thereby continuing the cycle in which it cannot fully perform its diplomatic role because of a lack of resources.

(D) The Limited Effectiveness of Commissions

The conventional wisdom on government commissions is that they are ineffective and rarely create change. A *Washington Post* reporter joked, “There are two ways to bury something in Washington: 1) Dig a hole in the ground, insert something, and cover it. 2) Appoint an advisory commission to report on watchamaycallit.”¹²⁷ By contrast, the conventional wisdom on the 9/11 Commission is that it is the notable exception to the doomed-commission rule. National security scholar Richard Betts applauded the 9/11 Commission for successfully marketing its recommendations and “reaching a bipartisan agreement not to make it a blame game.”¹²⁸ Terrorism expert and Georgetown University professor Bruce Hoffman also spoke of the commission’s report as a “consensus document” whose “recommendations have been taken seriously.”¹²⁹ On the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, DC issued a report card on the *9/11 Commission Report*’s recommendations. According to the assessment, 32 of the commission’s 41 recommendations have been fulfilled.¹³⁰

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¹²８ Richard Betts, telephone interview by author, January 27, 2011.
¹²⁹ Bruce Hoffman, telephone interview by author, January 31, 2011.
Scholars disagree on commission effectiveness. Jordan Tama, an expert in this field, wrote a book in 2011 entitled, *Terrorism and National Security Reform*. He defines a commission as a temporary panel of two or more people, including at least one private citizen, created by an act of Congress or the executive branch with the mandate to produce a final report within four years.\(^{131}\) Tama argues that several factors determine the effectiveness of a national security commission: political credibility (more so than specialized knowledge), a window of opportunity, the narrowness of its mandate, and whether the commission was created by the Congress or the executive branch.\(^{132}\) Even given a window of opportunity created by a crisis and heightened political pressure, change may not occur: “Reform does not happen easily or automatically after a crisis, because entrenched bureaucratic interests often put up powerful resistance to reform, and bargaining obstacles can prevent policy makers from reaching mutually beneficial agreements.”\(^{133}\)

Based on Tama’s criteria, the 9/11 Commission seemed destined for failure. For one, the Bush White House opposed the commission’s creation. The Republican and Democratic appointees to the commission also could have created a blame game, pinning responsibility on either the Clinton or Bush administrations. Third, the due date for the report was set at May 2004 — potentially after the window of opportunity had slammed shut.\(^{134}\) When the 567-page report came out in the summer of 2004, it exceeded all expectations. American novelist John Updike praised its fluid prose, writing in the *New Yorker* that the King James Bible was “our language’s lone masterpiece produced by a committee, at least until this year’s 9/11 Commission Report.”\(^{135}\) Not everyone held it in such high esteem. Richard Clarke, the former director of counterterrorism

\(^{131}\) Tama, p. 5.  
\(^{132}\) Ibid., p. 8.  
\(^{133}\) Ibid., p. 17.  
\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 156.  
\(^{135}\) Qtd. on Tama, p. 163.
at the National Security Council, responded with a *New York Times* opinion piece called, “Honorable Commission, Toothless Report.” Still, politicians and the public read the report with great interest. Over six million people downloaded the free PDF online, and 1.5 million bought the print edition — a rarity for a Washington publication that is hundreds of pages long. The book was number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list for nonfiction paperbacks for eleven weeks.

In the subsequent months, Congress passed the “Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act.” The legislation received media buzz for establishing the Director of National Intelligence, which Tama calls “the most significant reorganization of the intelligence community in nearly sixty years.” In addition, the reforms created a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), a freestanding organization whose director reports to the president and the director of national intelligence. The NCTC draws experts from the CIA and FBI to integrate intelligence, mandates new requirements for interagency intelligence sharing, and sets rules for prioritizing the appointment of national security advisors in times of presidential transition.

Many of the measures that were not adopted in this initial round of legislation were later included fully or in part in the “9/11 Commission Implementation Act,” leading pundits to call the 9/11 Commission among the most successful reform efforts in recent memory. Neither of these two pieces of legislation concentrated on the Department of State. Although the changes

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139 Tama, p. 22.
140 Ibid., p. 168.
141 Ibid., p. 171.
affect State in terms of how it interacts with other agencies, they did not significantly alter the way the agency operates or does its diplomatic work every day.

Does the passage of legislation mean a commission succeeds? The 9/11 Commission did overcome obstacles like its broad mandate, and more than three-quarters of its recommendations became law. Yet this, too, did not change Washington overnight.\textsuperscript{142} For example, not everyone agrees that the Director of National Intelligence position was an improvement. Policymakers also debate the value of adding the Department of Homeland Security: “Whereas some experts argue that the reorganizations improved coordination and information sharing, others claim they created unnecessary layers of bureaucracy.”\textsuperscript{143} Overall, commission effectiveness scholar Jordan Tama supports the changes: “The reality is that the overhauls have enabled the government to connect the dots more adeptly and to act in a more integrated fashion, but at the cost of some additional bloat.”\textsuperscript{144} Still, many of the changes pertained strictly to security or intelligence issues, not to diplomacy.

The smartest kind of national security strategy combines the hard power of military capabilities with the soft power of diplomacy and public outreach (an in-depth discussion of soft power follows in chapter 6). The 9/11 Commission, its hearings, and its report focused on intelligence failures for the right reasons — resolving those gaps is crucial to preventing another terrorist attack on America’s soil. Yet reforming the intelligence and defense communities at the exclusion of the diplomatic community will not benefit America in the long-term. The roots of the terrorism problem are the radicalized citizens of the Arab world, whose deep dissatisfaction with the United States will not be quelled through weapons or intelligence. In fact, exercising hard power without the aid of cultural exchanges, empowerment projects, and bilateral dialogues

\textsuperscript{142} Bipartisan Policy Center.
\textsuperscript{143} Tama, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.
may further alienate people. Just as the CIA and the Pentagon needed to evolve to confront terrorism and other transnational problems, so, too, does the State Department. In the absence of public pressure and commission attention, however, this kind of evolution is unlikely to occur. While the 9/11 Commission succeeded in changing the intelligence community, for better or worse, its recommendations failed to impact the State Department in a significant manner.
Chapter 6: Post-9/11 Changes

Though the State Department was not overtly named in the 9/11 Commission’s 41 recommendations, State heeded the suggestions from the report and the subsequent congressional hearings by redefining its efforts in three areas — counterterrorism coordination, public diplomacy, and 21st century statecraft — detailed below. This chapter concludes with a discussion about the value of soft power, reinforcing that the three areas of advancement are indeed significant.

(A) Bureau of Counterterrorism

In response to the 9/11 Commission, State’s Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) promised to create a new Bureau for Counterterrorism (S/CT), elevating the rank of the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism to full bureau status and promoting its director to the position of Assistant Secretary. The purpose of this change is to allow for more effective interagency coordination and intelligence sharing. As outlined in the QDDR, the new bureau would: (1) work with the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and the new Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, (2) enhance State’s abilities to assist partner organization in their counterterrorism efforts, and (3) engage in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy for counterterrorism purposes.145 Significantly, S/CT is now the State Department’s primary liaison to DHS.146

State established the new bureau in January 2012 under the leadership of Daniel Benjamin. On a symbolic level, this change both reflected State’s growing commitment to counterterrorism and put State at the forefront of the battle against violent extremism. After

146 Daniel Benjamin, “Ambassador-at-Large Benjamin on New Counterterrorism Bureau” (Press conference, Department of State, January 4, 2012), http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2012/01/20120104162419su0.5149151.html#axzz1mCv0rxK1.
being sidelined in the wake of 9/11, State reclaimed its stake in the conversation. In a press briefing, Benjamin explained that the 120 employees and contractors in S/CT “will lead in supporting U.S. counterterrorism diplomacy and seek to strengthen homeland security, countering violent extremism, and build the capacity of partner nations to deal effectively with terrorism.” Among the most substantial reorganization changes, the bureau created a Strategic Plans and Policy Unit to implement metrics to measure program effectiveness, and Benjamin planned to “tighten coordination between counterterrorism policy and programs.”

The other significant change in counterterrorism strategy is the creation of the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC). President Obama mandated this initiative in September 2011 through Executive Order 13584. Designed to influence audiences overseas, the new center aims to spread facts that undermine terrorist organizations’ propaganda. As the executive order explains, “These communications strategies focus not only on the violent actions and human costs of terrorism, but also on narratives that can positively influence those who may be susceptible to radicalization and recruitment by terrorist organizations.” The order references countering the actions and ideologies of Al Qaeda — the only terrorist organization named in the document — by monitoring the spread of information, identifying emerging trends, and promulgating public communication strategies for countering violent extremism. While anticipating vast coordination with the Pentagon, DOJ, DHS, the Department of the Treasury, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Counterterrorism Center of the CIA, the Broadcast Board of Governors (which runs Voice of America), and USAID, Executive Order 13584 places the authority for the CSCC squarely within the State Department.

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
(B) Public Diplomacy

In one of the most quoted lines in the foreign policy community, diplomat Richard Holbrooke asked after 9/11, “How can a man in a cave out-communicate the world’s leading communications society?”\(^{150}\) At the State Department, reforms in public diplomacy are arguably the most profound and visible changes since 9/11. The U.S. Information Agency initially handled public relations on behalf of the federal government, beginning at the height of the Cold War in 1953. After the 1998 merger (explained in chapter 5), State took over this role by creating the Under Secretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy. In the bureaucratic hierarchy, the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, which coordinates exchanges including the Fulbright Program, and the Bureau of International Information Programs, which deals with communications efforts, answer to the Under Secretary. Many of the regional bureaus have their own public diplomacy offices, which lengthens the chain of command and requires any bureaucrat seeking to obtain clearance on a document to check in with extra people. In the 13 years since it took over public diplomacy, State has sought to increase the number of programs and their visibility, even in the face of budget cuts. This became all the more important after the September 11\(^{th}\) attacks, as American relationships with the Muslim world faltered.

A year after 9/11, Peter Peterson, then the chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations, published an article about the role of public diplomacy in the War on Terror.\(^{151}\) The goal of public diplomacy is to influence public opinion and mobilize support in favor of American policies, yet he argues that the federal government still has to make great strides in its efforts.\(^{152}\) He explains that Americans are not perceived as being empathetic toward the plights of others,

\(^{152}\) Ibid., p. 84.
which breeds foreign resentment of American wealth. These negative attitudes and sentiments of distrust are particularly high in the Middle East and among the Muslim diaspora.\textsuperscript{153} According to Peterson:

Addressing the image problem should be viewed as no less than a vital component of national security. Defending America’s homeland, seeking out and destroying terrorists, and using public diplomacy to facilitate allied support of the United States and to reduce the attractiveness of terrorism are all part of the same battle.\textsuperscript{154}

Public diplomacy can determine whether an initiative succeeds or fails. Thus, it is crucial to implement a public diplomacy strategy from the earliest planning stages: “Too often public diplomacy is seen as reactive, not proactive, and as a response (often defensive) to a crisis.”\textsuperscript{155} The government has a long way to go in integrating public diplomacy into every foreign affairs engagement.

To demonstrate the value of public diplomacy, State needs to streamline and prioritize projects so that the agency can demonstrate real results. Peterson urges channeling more effort toward foreign public opinion polling and using that information to do targeted marketing toward particular subsets of audiences abroad. If American voices are off-putting among certain groups, diplomats should direct their energies toward promoting the voices of America’s allies that have broader appeal. Training is integral to making outreach efforts succeed. Extensive public diplomacy training is optional for Foreign Service Officers, and even public diplomacy specialists’ early diplomatic assignments are often in a consular capacity rather than in public diplomacy.\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p. 75-6.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., p. 77.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 89.
Like many previous critics and commissions, Peterson recommends a substantial funding increase for public diplomacy and making these efforts a major part of each regional bureau’s deputy assistant secretary’s duties. From 1993 to 2001, funding for State’s cultural programs declined, and American exchanges with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen fell 21 percent. By the time 9/11 occurred, American support in the Muslim world had greatly eroded. In the decade since then, public diplomacy efforts have sought to reverse that trend. A 2011 Brookings Institution poll found that the Arab world’s approval of the United States had improved from ten percent in 2010 to 25 percent in 2011, perhaps as a result of America’s handling of the Arab spring. On the whole, President Obama’s approval abroad is higher than that of President Bush. Of course, these statistics are a result of numerous factors, but public diplomacy does play some role. Fifty-nine percent of Arabs polled expressed unfavorable views of the United States, and public diplomacy can do much to remedy that.

In June 2009, Secretary of State Clinton created the Special Representative to Muslim Communities and appointed Farah Pandith to fill the post. Born in India, Pandith worked on issues including Muslim engagement and countering violent extremism at the NSC and then at State. Secretary Clinton tasked her with creating a ‘new beginning’ between Americans and Muslims around the world: “It’s a relationship that requires us to listen, share ideas, and find areas of common ground in order to expand a peaceful, prosperous future. […] This is a dialogue that is not going to focus solely on terrorism or radicalization but instead focus on what we all have in common.”

Since taking on her position almost three years ago, Pandith has addressed

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157 Ibid., p. 93.
159 Ibid.
160 Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Swearing-In Ceremony: Special Representative to Muslim Communities” (Address, Department of State, September 15, 2009), http://www.state.gov/s/srmc/134611.htm.
hundreds of audiences and connected young leaders through initiatives like Generation Change, a global network that fosters collaboration at the grassroots level. Her major undertaking was 2011 Hours Against Hate, a partnership with the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism that encouraged students around the globe to volunteer their time in a community whose dominant religion was not their own. Through exposure to diversity, the program aimed to teach tolerance and achieve the goals of public diplomacy in an organic way. Pandith’s appointment is a powerful example of how adding another office in a bureaucracy need not be a burden — if done properly, it can be an asset.

(C) 21st Century Statecraft Initiative

In response to the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations, Secretary of State Rice hired Jared Cohen in 2006 to advance digital projects and communication technology. At age 24, the former Rhodes Scholar became the youngest member of the Policy Planning Staff. The following year, Cohen also published *Children of Jihad*, a book about his experiences traveling in the Middle East. He describes encounters with Iranian students who professed their love of American music or cited Voice of America as their favorite news source. Many young people flocked to Internet cafes, where they could communicate digitally without fearing their IP address would be traced: “The Internet is far too large and there are far too many sites for the government to effectively monitor what its youth say and do in this digital realm.” Cohen clearly admires their desire to connect. Through interviews and observation, he concludes:

For young people, technology is first and foremost a means to express themselves, interact, generate their own media, and shape a digital identity that may or may

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162 Ibid.
165 Cohen, p. 57.
not be in sync with real life. They rely on this technology for their autonomy and as a result, it is through this digital means that the youth have been emancipated from the rest of the population. They are incredibly proficient at learning the innovative uses of technology. [...] Unless they have deliberately shielded themselves from technology, nearly every single youth in the Middle East is accessible.166

Cohen brought his experiences from Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Iraq to the State Department, where he would push the bureaucracy to engage Middle Eastern youth and thereby decrease their participation in terrorist organizations.

At State, Cohen did much of the work for the 21st Century Statecraft initiative, which launched in 2010.167 Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter, the Director of Policy Planning, spelled out the basis of this new program in a Foreign Affairs article entitled, “America’s Edge: Power in the Networked Century.” Slaughter outlines the consequences of living in a networked world, including that even a small group of terrorists can rely on a support system that magnifies their impact. Networks, she writes, exist “above the state, below the state, and through the state.”168 Implicitly, Slaughter recognizes that the state can influence but not control digital communication. She concedes that governments worldwide have been slower to embrace digital networks than non-government organizations or private companies, which have long known that while networks cannot guarantee a particular outcome, they provide the kind of connectivity that proves essential in a crisis or when an organization needs to brainstorm new ideas.169

Slaughter argues that the defining aspect of the 21st century will be agencies and corporations “collecting the best ideas from around the globe” and implementing them.170 She applauds companies like Google for having an almost nonexistent hierarchy, promoting a culture

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166 Ibid., p. 273-4.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
of creativity that is absent in government agencies. Through 21st Century Statecraft, the State Department is attempting to achieve that energy and efficiency in a dense bureaucratic structure. The initiative took off in January 2010. Two major events occurred that month: the Text Haiti project raised more than $40 million for victims of the Haitian earthquake disaster, and Google announced it would no longer abide by China’s censorship laws. Suddenly, social media and the proliferation of technology topped meeting agendas at the highest levels of the State Department.

A week later, Secretary Clinton delivered an address on Internet freedom and “the freedom to connect.”171 Her passion for this agenda became pivotal for selling other government officials and President Obama on these issues. A New York Times Magazine profile of Cohen and Alec Ross, his State partner in digital innovation, described 21st Century Statecraft as “a shift in form and in strategy — a way to amplify traditional diplomatic efforts, develop tech-based policy solutions and encourage cyberactivism.”172

In line with the 21st Century Statecraft agenda, State has expanded its social media presence. The Office of eDiplomacy was founded in 2003 as part of the Bureau of Information Resource Management, but it did not undertake social media immediately. Social media exploded several years into the 2000s: Facebook was founded in February 2004, YouTube in 2005, and Twitter in 2006. Yet State did not begin engaging in social media until 2010 and particularly 2011 — almost five years after most of these sites were founded. The following chart reflects the significant growth in the State Department’s social media presence over the past two years.173

171 Lichtenstein.
172 Ibid.
The digital bounds continue to be blurry. When Cohen directly emailed Twitter chairman Jack Dorsey to ask him to postpone Twitter maintenance during Iran’s election in 2009 so that Iranian citizens could keep communicating online, public speculation ensued about whether the U.S. government had crossed the line. Did such a move constitute intervention in the Iranian election? Secretary Clinton chose to stand by Cohen’s action. Critics like Evgeny Morozov, a technology scholar, condemn Internet freedom initiatives at the federal level because they have the potential to benefit non-democratic regimes: “Democratic and authoritarian states alike are now seeking ‘information sovereignty’ from American companies, especially those perceived as being in bed with the U.S. government.”

Morozov argues that Washington cannot control Silicon Valley, much less civil society groups abroad. Yet as Ross explains, “Technology isn’t going anywhere. So we can fear we can’t control it and ignore the space, or we can recognize we can’t control it, but we can influence it.” Given the limitless nature of the Internet, it may offer the best solution to transnational challenges. Though the State Department ventured into the realm of digital technology cautiously, it has made remarkable progress since hiring Cohen and Ross.

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175 Qtd. in Lichtenstein.
In 2010, Cohen co-wrote a pivotal *Foreign Affairs* article entitled, “The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion Power,” with Google CEO Eric Schmidt. Just weeks before the Arab Spring embroiled the Middle East and North Africa in protests coordinated via social media, Cohen and Schmidt argued, “The advent and power of connection technologies — tools that connect people to vast amounts of information and to one another — will make the twenty-first century all about surprises.” In what they termed the “interconnected estate,” a play off of Abbe Sieyes’ famous pamphlet on the Third Estate in the French Revolution, individuals will be empowered to create rapid change, occasionally with negative or unpredictable results. Governments will be forced to acknowledge that citizen-led initiatives may prove more dynamic, popular, and attractive than those produced top-down, even in democratic states.

Those who argue against digital diplomacy say that too much engagement with people outside the system — people who may not understand official U.S. government positions or have security clearances — means relinquishing too much control. In response, Cohen counters, “The 21st century is a really terrible time to be a control freak.” Yet the State Department functions through control mechanisms, with ‘need to know’ policies and specific diplomatic channels acting as the main mediums for projects. Thus, convincing everyone at Foggy Bottom of the importance of 21st Century Statecraft will take time.

**(D) The Value of Soft Power**

Most of these post-9/11 changes — coordinating counterterrorism communications, engaging youth and civilian activists, going digital through 21st Century Statecraft — are examples of bolstering soft power. Not everyone sees the immediate value in this, which is

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177 Lichtenstein.
apparent through budget allocations and program reductions (discussed in greater detail in chapters 7 and 8). Yet in a world where the NSC, the Department of Defense, and the CIA take the lead in areas that used to be controlled by the State Department, one of the few spaces where State has a built-in advantage and superior expertise is public diplomacy and soft power. Embracing this role and excelling at it would not only enhance America’s standing in the world but also increase State’s standing among other agencies.

Public diplomacy goes hand-in-hand with soft power. In March 2008, Harvard political scientist Joseph Nye penned a much-cited *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* article on this topic, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power.”178 He defines soft power as obtaining a desired outcome through means other than coercion or payment, in other words operating outside the traditional ‘carrots and sticks’ model of foreign policy. Public diplomacy advances soft power, which is crucial because a sound national security strategy combines hard and soft power. Nye writes, “Soft power is not merely influence […] It is also the ability to entice and attract.”179 Public diplomacy attracts new or previously hostile audiences through cultural exports and exchanges. This idea emerged during World War II and the early Cold War period. President Roosevelt created the Office of Wartime Information, which infamously shaped Hollywood films into propaganda tools. Later, Voice of America and Radio Free Europe would harness the new technology of radio to appeal to audiences abroad.180 When the Berlin Wall came down, the American approach to public diplomacy changed: “Americans were far more interested in budget savings than in investments of soft power. […] Public diplomacy had become so identified with fighting the cold war that few Americans noticed that

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179 Ibid., p. 95.
180 Ibid., p. 98.
with an information revolution occurring, soft power was becoming more rather than less important.”\textsuperscript{181} Today, the Internet produces an overwhelming amount of information, meaning that attention and credibility are in higher demand than the content itself. Everyone wants to know where to look and when.

Achieving a high level of credibility with international audiences demands resources — in the form of funding but also in the form of innovative thinkers. As Nye argues, “The effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by minds changed (as shown in interviews or polls), not dollars spent or slick production packages.”\textsuperscript{182} For example, he writes, Congress poured money into Alhurra, an Arabic-language satellite channel in the Middle East, but audiences there see the program as propaganda, and it cannot compete with Al Jazeera. As such, Alhurra lacks public diplomacy value.\textsuperscript{183} Additionally, ideas that succeed domestically may fail abroad. President Bush’s term ‘axis of evil’ played well after his 2002 State of the Union, but foreigners found the phrase moralistic. The British Foreign Office forbade its diplomats from using ‘axis of evil’ because it reminded audiences of Al Qaeda’s global jihad narrative.\textsuperscript{184} Competent and well-trained public diplomacy experts at the State Department can resolve these kinds of situations, enhancing America’s soft power even outside of diplomatic channels and negotiations.

More recently, Nye wrote an opinion piece on soft power in \textit{Foreign Policy} as a response to congressional budget cuts. He warns, “U.S. foreign policy has tended to over-rely on hard power in recent years because it is the most direct and visible source of American strength. The Pentagon is the best-trained and best-resourced arm of the U.S. government, but there are limits

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p. 98-99.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., p. 101.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., p. 104.
to what hard power can achieve on its own.”\textsuperscript{185} An overuse of hard power undercuts soft power, such as when the Soviet Union repressed uprisings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia or when mistreatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib tainted the American involvement in Iraq. In practice, politicians too often prefer the mobilization of hard power because it yields quicker results: “The payoffs for exchange and assistance programs is often measured in decades, not weeks or months.”\textsuperscript{186} Furthermore, no single agency oversees a strategy or budget for soft power tools — such as public diplomacy, broadcasting, exchange programs, and disaster relief — though if one agency were to do so, State is the obvious choice. The expansion of the soft-power approach at the State Department is significant and should be regarded as such. Still, much has yet to be accomplished in this realm.


\textsuperscript{186} Ibid.
Chapter 7: Ongoing Challenges

Citing what has not changed is more difficult, as State Department officials are unlikely to name failed projects or missed opportunities in public forums. Still, the analysis in chapter 6 reveals areas where the State Department moved too slowly or failed to act at all. Recognizing these ongoing structural and policy challenges opens the door to improving the system into one that is more efficient and responsive to 21st-century threats. Five original conclusions can be drawn from the current structure of the State Department and policy papers released by State and the White House:

(1) The changes to the Bureau of Counterterrorism were enacted in January 2012, over a decade after 9/11 occurred. This change — that incidentally did more to change the bureau’s position in the organization and entailed minimal reorganization — required pressure from both the 9/11 Commission and the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review before it took place. This slow pace of reform inhibits State’s ability to do its job effectively.

(2) Public diplomacy efforts continue to exist in both the regional bureaus and the functional bureaus with attempted coordination by the Bureau of Public Affairs. Although public diplomacy efforts have expanded, particularly in regard to Muslim communities, no evidence exists to indicate that these efforts are better coordinated today than before. Measuring the success of public diplomacy initiatives is a murky, difficult process, but measuring coordination is not. Multiple regional and functional bureaus should not be filing concurrent budget requests for public diplomacy projects. A streamlined chain of command with a definitive hierarchy would resolve this coordination dilemma.

(3) The successes in counterterrorism and public diplomacy came largely in the form of policy changes, not structural changes. With the notable exception of the creation of the Office of the
Special Representative to Muslim Communities, the internal structure of the State Department looks much like it did at the turn of the 21st century. Structural changes are not always necessary or an improvement over the old system, but when Congressmen and women threaten State with budget cuts, it is often because they see the department as using staff and funds ineffectively. Combining and redefining some key bureaus would go a long way toward curbing this criticism.

(4) New policies face problems when they come up against forces of habit or older, more entrenched rules. For example, the post-9/11 era has seen an abundance of legislation and discussion about inter-agency information sharing, particularly in the intelligence realm. Still, as national security scholar Richard Betts notes, “Now there’s a legal mandate to share information, but there’s still countervailing pressure regarding being exposed to classified information on a ‘need to know’ basis.” It should be the responsibility of each Assistant Secretary to make his or her bureau accept policy changes.

(5) Even official documents concede that while diplomatic and strategic efforts to combat Al Qaeda have evolved, so has the terrorist organization and others like it. In his writing, terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman compares terrorist groups to the archetypal shark in the water, always trying to stay one step ahead. Hoffman said in an interview that the federal government is “still completely reactive regarding terrorism. We’re very tactical and not very good at anticipating.” The Obama administration rolled out its National Strategy for Counterterrorism in June 2011. Much of the strategy paper is positive and forward-looking, emphasizing the successes over the past decade and the sustained commitment to undercutting Al Qaeda’s strength and message. The preface recognizes, “Our terrorist adversaries have shown themselves

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188 Richard Betts, telephone interview by author, January 27, 2011.
189 Bruce Hoffman, telephone interview by author, January 31, 2011.
to be agile and adaptive; defeating them requires that we develop and pursue a strategy that is even more agile and adaptive.\textsuperscript{190} Ironically, the document reads much like the terrorism chapter in the 2002 \textit{National Security Strategy}, published by the Bush White House nine years earlier. Although the Bush strategy features more aggressive language on waging a war of ideas and destroying terrorist networks, the core definition of Al Qaeda and the plans for combatting it remain strikingly similar.\textsuperscript{191} The overall government’s approach — both at State and on a broader level — may not be as agile or adaptive as the White House hopes.

Chapter 8: Budget Constraints

The greatest limitation on the State Department is its budget, which has been in flux over the past decade. The State Authorization Act for the 2001 fiscal year allocated $7.3 billion to the agency.\textsuperscript{192} The total State Department appropriation for fiscal year 2011 was just under $15 billion — a more than two-fold increase, but one that must be viewed in context. In that same time period, the national defense budget increased from $430 billion to over $700 billion.\textsuperscript{193} While military expenditures have skyrocketed, economic assistance has not. In the 1970s and 1980s, foreign aid used to comprise almost two percent of the federal budget, hitting an all-time high in 1985. After the Cold War ended, Congress began to put less of a premium on foreign aid. The 1990s reductions carried over into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, and foreign aid today comprises one percent of the budget, though it did peak at 1.6 percent in 2004.\textsuperscript{194}

Public diplomacy is one of the hardest hit areas within the agency’s budget. In 2011, State employed 1,765 people for public diplomacy purposes.\textsuperscript{195} By contrast, USIA, which handled public diplomacy before it merged with the State Department, employed 12,000 people at its height in the 1960s, and 6,715 just before the merger in 1997.\textsuperscript{196} Public diplomacy plans are under constant scrutiny because their success can be intangible, and State has to justify each project annually to Congress. The 2013 budget requests $10 million more for youth engagement than was allocated for 2012, to be shared between the Near Eastern Affairs and South and

\textsuperscript{192} Department of State, \textit{FY 2003 Department of State Budget in Brief}, p. 6, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/7910.pdf.
Central Asian Affairs bureaus. Projects with modest costs make sense in an unfavorable economic climate, but $10 million is a drop in the bucket compared to what the Pentagon spends. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, military operations in those countries cost an estimated $383 million and $300 million per day, respectively.

State does intend to significantly increase its counterterrorism expenditures. The department spent $3,207,000 in fiscal year 2011. For fiscal year 2013, State requested $19 million. This pales in comparison to what Defense and the CIA spend, but is fitting since State’s counterterrorism diplomacy costs less than military and intelligence operations. Terrorism expert and Georgetown University professor Bruce Hoffman argues for an even greater allocation: “We to ramp up what we spend on counterterrorism diplomacy, especially in a time of military cutbacks.” He blames Congress and the nature of the American political system for the small size of the budget in previous years: “The metrics for the drone program is pretty obvious, it’s dead bodies, whereas diplomacy or building capabilities amongst allies is much more difficult to measure. It may not be quantifiable in an election cycle.” He suggests that the White House could do a better job of lobbying Congress and educating the public.

Not everyone agrees that State needs a bigger budget. Alvin Felzenberg, the principal spokesperson for the 9/11 Commission, says the department should focus on making the most of the resources it does have and reforming its system: “[State Department bureaucrats] resist ideas from the outside, resist change in entry requirements, stifle creativity, and see their mission as to protect mediocre bureaucrats.” Republicans in the 112th Congress agree and have consistently

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197 Department of State, FY 2013, p. 57.
199 Department of State, FY 2013, p. 133.
200 Bruce Hoffman, telephone interview by author, January 31, 2011.
201 Ibid.
threatened to reduce State’s allocation, arguing that certain initiatives are wasteful and redundant. While perspectives on foreign aid vary based on political allegiance or how one sees America’s role in the world, funding for public diplomacy and counterterrorism should not. Both of these are in the United States’ immediate national interest, as they not only enhance America’s image abroad but also achieve national security goals. Defense and intelligence operations are integral to security, but they are also inherently more expensive. Congress and the White House should consider which goals could be met through State Department projects, at much lower cost to taxpayers.

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203 Walter Pincus, “State Dept. Reeling from Budget Cuts.”
Chapter 9: Implications for Scholarship

In 1971, legendary diplomat Richard Holbrooke wrote, “The massive foreign affairs machine built up during the postwar era rumbles on, as ornate and unwieldy as ever.”\(^{204}\) This statement rings equally true today. The territorialism, hierarchical rigidity, inertia, and incomplete control, detailed in chapter 3, still plague the State Department. The difference is that in the postwar period, scholars concerned themselves with this subject. By contrast, Washington scholars today obsess over the military and intelligence communities, at the expense of the diplomatic world. The 9/11 Commission identified the same problem as Holbrooke. In a special epilogue for the 10\(^{th}\) anniversary of September 11\(^{th}\), members of the commission wrote:

> It remains the case today, as in 2004, that the national security institutions of the U.S. government were decisively shaped between 1940 and 1960. The last ten years have, however, already seen more innovation in them than in any decade since the 1950s. Still, it has not gone far enough.\(^{205}\)

Simply stated, an apparatus forged during the Truman administration does not have the capacity to solve 21\(^{st}\)-century problems.

Three areas demand particular attention from scholars. First, more research needs to be conducted on how the structure of federal agencies impacts their output. Does an ideal structure exist? Can bureaucrats self-coordinate or do they always require oversight? In regard to State, the literature on these questions dates back to the 1970s. A second area, and one that holds particular significance in today’s security environment, is studying how various actors at the federal level can coordinate their counterterrorism efforts to maximize results while minimizing redundancy and waste. Never before have so many agencies — State, Defense, the CIA, DOJ, DHS, and now the newly created Office of the Director of National Intelligence — had to

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\(^{205}\) 9/11 Commission Report, p. 531.
coordinate on a top-level project. *Ad hoc* arrangements will not suffice in this effort. Creating an effective, if imperfect, system will require analysis from critical and objective outsiders. Finally, scholars and think tank fellows should further investigate the question this thesis poses: what is the necessary threshold to achieve dramatic change? State is far from the only agency that suffers from bureaucratic maladies. Even an event with the magnitude and long-term ramifications of 9/11 has not shaken up the department. Would change come from a commission focused exclusively on State, or through congressional pressure? These questions necessitate further attention.
Chapter 10: Policy Recommendations

Changing an entrenched system is challenging, but after 9/11, the federal government should have risen to the occasion. The events described in chapter 4 show that the State Department was slow to respond to the threat of Al Qaeda, and those in chapters 5 and 6 reveal the ongoing challenges facing the agency. The fault does not lie with the department alone. Bureaucracies notoriously resist change, and in the wake of the terrorist attacks, congressional and commission attention focused on the intelligence and military communities. They were the subjects of hearings and reports. Ultimately, they also received more funding than the State Department to cover the new positions and offices created.

Unlike major organizations in the private sector, State faces a particular kind of challenge because its leadership changes so often. Each new Secretary of State and politically appointed Under Secretary proposes his or her own set of reforms. In her memoir, Secretary Rice recalls her first impressions of Foggy Bottom when she moved over from being the National Security Advisor in 2005. She noted immediately that the “the organization needed to be flatter,” and that even simple policy papers took a long time to work their way through the bureaucratic chain of command. Furthermore, she writes, “The officers we did have were not properly apportioned to the tasks at hand. We had nearly as many officers in Germany, which had a population of 80 million, as in India, which had a population of a billion. That was, in large part, a legacy of the Cold War.” Seven years later, the department continues to struggle with the Cold War legacy.

State’s mission statement reads: “Shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions of stability and progress for the benefit of the American

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207 Ibid., p. 316.
people and people everywhere.” For over two centuries, this mission could be achieved through bilateral negotiations — the traditional form of international diplomacy. Today, the traditional approach does not suffice. The State Department should have responded to 9/11 earlier and with bolder changes, and to do so, should have been allocated more resources. The following four recommendations would improve the department’s operations:

(1) **Reevaluate the importance of regional bureaus.** In a world where most problems transcend political borders, regional bureaus should not dominate the State Department. While detailed knowledge of local issues is vital to State’s policymaking, the functional bureaus that handle issues like counterterrorism, arms control, and human rights deserve more staff and resources because they deal with big picture, long-term issues every day.

(2) **Appoint several more advisors from outside the Washington bubble who can push creative, innovative ideas.** State Department advisors Jared Cohen and Alec Ross began this process, but some, including 9/11 Commission Spokesperson Alvin Felzenberg, argue that they were not given enough support: “I was disappointed to see that [Cohen] received more publicity than did his program and I was discouraged to see him leave to take a high paying job with Google before his program could be seriously institutionalized and evaluated.” As an outside consultant to both State and the Pentagon, Felzenberg found the latter to be more receptive to critical advice. This does not bode well for State. In the long run, the agency will not reform from the inside, through protracted meetings and lengthy memoranda. Three or four well-chosen advisors, in addition to a strong Director of Policy Planning, can have a significant impact.

(3) **Commit to more effectively evaluating public diplomacy efforts.** Congress will not allocate more resources unless it sees results. Public attitudes are difficult to measure, but State should set

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metrics for their projects, particularly in the Middle East, and publicize the results of public opinion polls. Initiatives that succeed and draw national media attention, the way Voice of America did during the Cold War, are more likely to secure funding in the future.

(4) *Stake a claim in the fight against terrorism and define it.* State can make certain contributions through public diplomacy and cultural engagement that other agencies cannot. These efforts often go unrecognized by the Washington community and the public at large. Terrorism will dominate the public discourse for the foreseeable future, and the agency needs to explain its role or risk becoming irrelevant.

Transforming State’s bureaucracy will require patience, dedication, and visionary ideas. Washington should not have a reason to view the State Department as an agency that stifles creativity and values precedence and established rules over innovation. The department has much to offer in the realm of international affairs, but only if it can find a way to overcome the challenges it faces.
Appendix: Organizational Charts, 1948 and 2009

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