

## POWELL'S LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES – TIME FOR STATE DEPARTMENT TO REVISIT

BY

MICHELLE L. STEFANICK  
United States Department of State

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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TIME FOR STATE DEPARTMENT TO REVISIT**

by

Michelle L. Stefanick  
United States Department of State

Dr. Stephen J. Gerras  
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013



## **ABSTRACT**

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Since the end of the Cold War, study after study has described the Department of State as an institution improperly staffed, trained, and resourced to sufficiently and adequately address the national security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What all these external reports lack, however, is the review of the internal cultural change needed within the Department of State. Under Secretary of State Colin Powell's tenure, this cultural change process was started, but has yet to be inculcated. The principles he effectively espoused must be reinitiated to bring about the necessary institutional change required within the Department of State to be prepared to face its future challenges. This paper identifies the measures taken under Secretary Powell's leadership and highlights aspects of its internal culture that need to be changed to transform.





## POWELL'S LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES – TIME FOR STATE DEPARTMENT TO REVISIT

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates recently reflected a long-standing view of some Pentagon officials that the Department of Defense cannot meet the nation's security challenges alone. At an April 15, 2008, House Armed Services Committee hearing, Secretary Gates posed the question "...how can we improve and integrate America's instruments of national power to reflect the new realities and requirements of this century?"<sup>1</sup> At the same hearing, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice concurred that the "...challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century require both change within individual departments of our national security apparatus, and better and stronger means for interagency action and coordination."<sup>2</sup> Later in the year, the Project on National Security Reform, under the sponsorship of the Center for the Study of the Presidency, issued its report on the national security interagency system. This report concluded that the U.S. national security is fundamentally at risk and its entire system, in need of reform.<sup>3</sup>

The intent of this paper is not to challenge the necessity for national security reform; instead it asserts that before undertaking the massive overarching reform proposed, it is necessary to first implement change within one of its vital departments, the Department of State. To address the changes needed for the future operational health of the Department this paper reflects upon the last time the organization encountered such internal operational capacity challenges: from 2001-2005, during the tenure of Secretary of State Colin Powell. This paper identifies measures taken under Secretary Powell's leadership for the Department to recover its capabilities that could be

used as a suggested framework by the new Secretary of State. Based on my twenty years of insight from within the Department of State,<sup>4</sup> this paper also highlights aspects of its internal culture that need to be changed to transform.

### The Powell Doctrine

In January 2001, when Secretary Powell arrived at the State Department, parallels were drawn between his famous principles of military engagement known as the Powell doctrine, and its application to his new mission, managing the Department of State. According to these principles, the military services must be used only if there is a compelling national interest at stake, overwhelming commitment of resources, clear objectives, and support of Congress and the American people.<sup>5</sup> Prior to his arrival, the Department was subjected to independent study after study, all of these concluding that the foreign policy institution suffered from “a lack of vision, dysfunctional human resources management, outdated information technology, crumbling buildings, and declining morale.”<sup>6</sup>

Also prior to Secretary Powell’s arrival were calls for an end to all these external reviews by Department of State employees. Working under the banner “SOS for DOS: A Call for Action,” they circulated a letter that pleaded for a “long-term, bipartisan effort to modernize and strengthen the Department of State.”<sup>7</sup> Signing such a letter was an act of courage in a Department culture that discourages risk taking. Only 1,614 Foreign Service and civil service employees out of the approximately 17,000 State Department employees worldwide, signed the letter,<sup>8</sup> which likened the Department to a “rusted-out diplomatic hulk that [was] no longer seaworthy.”<sup>9</sup> The letter called upon the next

Secretary of State to pay attention to management by asking “for the support, involvement, and leadership needed.”<sup>10</sup>

During his confirmation hearing Secretary of State-Designate Powell proclaimed, “there will be no new studies, no more new groups of wise men coming together to tell us how the State Department should be organized. We’re just going to start fixing things...”<sup>11</sup> On January 22, 2001, during his first week in office, Secretary Powell acknowledged his commitment to the applause of an audience full of State Department employees, “I’m not just coming in to serve the foreign policy needs of the American people. I’m coming in as the leader and the manager of this Department.”<sup>12</sup> Secretary Powell’s two key objectives were: (1) to fix the Department’s most critical management problems and (2) to instill a culture of leadership,<sup>13</sup> because not fixing it would have handicapped diplomacy as a vital instrument of national power.

By the time Secretary Powell left in January 2005, the foreign affairs institution was in a far stronger position than when he assumed office. During his tenure Secretary Powell successfully obtained an infusion of funding resources to hire personnel, to acquire new information technology, to enhance security and facilities; improved State’s public diplomacy, public affairs, and congressional relations activities; and attempted to inculcate an organizational culture change of leadership within the Department. The Foreign Affairs Council, a non-partisan umbrella group of eleven organizations interested in foreign policy issues, wrote of Powell’s management in its November 2004 task force report: “In short, the achievements have been extraordinary – even historic.”<sup>14</sup>

From Secretary Powell's departure in 2005 until 2008, Congress has turned down all personnel funding requests, despite sharply increasing Foreign Service staffing demands in Iraq, Afghanistan, hard-language training and other emerging priority areas.<sup>15</sup> Secretary Gates sounded an alarm of concern by noting in an address at Kansas State University that "what is clear to me is that there is a need for a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security – diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development...Indeed, having robust civilian capabilities available could make it less likely that military force will have to be used in the first place, as local problems might be dealt with before they become crises."<sup>16</sup> Secretary Rice stated in April 2008 that the Department faces a critical shortage of Foreign Service Officers, with many embassies operating at 70 percent of their desired staffing and employees not getting the training they need to succeed.<sup>17</sup>

Just four years after Secretary Powell's departure, the studies are back that once again conclude that the Department of State lacks the staff, competencies, training, authorities, programs and funding to execute the nation's foreign policy challenges of today.<sup>18</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup> century security challenges that our nation faces cannot be addressed by a national security apparatus that includes a Department of State in such dire condition. Given the erosion of interest and priority that has taken place in the past few years it is now time to revisit and assess the impact of Powell's leadership principles during his tenure from 2001-2005 and to apply lessons learned accordingly and as immediately as possible.

### Powell's Leadership Principles – Time for Revisit

A new Administration will soon be in place to lead our nation, including a new Secretary of State. Several leadership principles Powell effectively espoused during his tenure as Secretary of State should be readopted to continue the cultural change he started. However, some of these principles can only be adopted by the new incoming Secretary of State.

The first principle involves a commitment by the new Secretary of State to the Department's employees as was made by Secretary Powell back in January 2001. The second involves selecting key officials, both career and non-career, as committed to the Department as the new Secretary of State not only in its policy formulation, but in its management and leadership; the approach effectively used by Secretary Powell.<sup>19</sup> The third involves the Secretary's key goals and objectives for the Department connected to the troika of policy formulation, management and leadership. By readopting these principles, the new Secretary of State, similar to Secretary Powell, could end her tenure with a foreign affairs institution in a far stronger position than she will now find it. Not fixing it will continue to handicap this national security instrument.

### Cultural Change Needed within the Department

Like Secretary Powell, the new Secretary of State cannot transform the Department of State alone. Transformation will also depend on the employees of the Department of State. To address the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges, the Department must make changes within its current risk-averse, individual-centric culture.

From 1993 to 2002, Louis Gerstner served as chairman and chief executive officer of the International Business Machines (IBM) Corporation, and obtained

accolades from the business community for bringing IBM back from the brink of insolvency to restore its place as one of America's top companies. Under Gerstner's leadership, he transformed this bureaucratic structure that lacked vision and competitiveness, riddled with poor morale. He accomplished this by addressing IBM's culture and reestablishing the company's belief in its capacities. In his book titled *Who says Elephants Can't Dance?*, Gerstner states, "I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game – it *is* the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value."<sup>20</sup>

The Department of State would be well served to use Gerstner's insight. As Secretaries of State and political appointees come and go, only the bureaucracy made up of Foreign Service, Civil Service and locally engaged staff worldwide, its entire workforce, can preserve knowledge, behaviors, norms and values over time.<sup>21</sup> Only through a dedicated commitment of institutional stewardship and successful internal strategic leadership can this truly be accomplished.

Strategic leadership is defined as: "a person's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organization."<sup>22</sup> To address the uncertainty created by the 21<sup>st</sup> century national security challenges, the first insight that current strategic leaders within the Department of State - the senior members of the Foreign and Executive Services as well as high-ranking political appointees - must recognize is that it is impossible for them individually to have all the answers. These future uncertain challenges come from a variety of sources such as rising state powers and non-state actors, pursuits of science and technology, and global interdependence.

Department strategic leaders must also fully engage with the public, domestic and abroad, within the executive branch, as well as the legislative. America's complex national security environment requires an in-depth knowledge of the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power, as well as interrelationships among them. Leaders must not only know themselves and their own organizations, but also understand a host of different players, rules and conditions.<sup>23</sup>

The way an organization, or in this case, the Department of State speaks to its various audiences says a lot about how it sees itself.<sup>24</sup> This includes from the top as well as those lower down in the organization, those serving abroad in our embassies, and across the functional, specialty and regional bureaus within the Department. To be a teamwork-oriented institution, the Department needs to further utilize, capitalize, and develop upon the knowledge, expertise and skills from its entire culturally-diverse workforce.

### One Mission, One Team

The Foreign Service and State Department writ large tends to reward individual excellence more than teamwork. During Secretary Powell's tenure, he strived to get the most out of State's entire workforce - Foreign Service, Civil Service and Locally Engaged (LE) Staff alike. As a result, all State Department employees felt that their work was important and recognized, from the basement maintenance worker to the career ambassador. The tensions between the Civil Service and Foreign Service and between officers and staff dramatically reduced, and there was truly a sense of "One Mission, One Team."<sup>25</sup>



In January 2006, a year into her tenure, Secretary Rice announced her strategic vision of “transformational diplomacy,” a diplomacy that not only reports about the world as it is, but seeks to change the world itself. Her plan was to reposition hundreds of Foreign Service (FS) Generalists from Europe and Washington to critical emerging areas in Africa, South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere. This shift would create more regional focus and expertise, with others assigned outside of the national capitals, “closer to the mood in the streets.” Twenty-first century diplomacy will require better “jointness” between soldiers and diplomats. FS Generalists not only need to master difficult languages, serve at hardship posts, and train as expert analysts of policy, they also need to be first-rate administrators of programs, capable of helping foreign citizens to strengthen the rule of law, to start businesses, to improve health and to reform education.<sup>26</sup>

However, this approach was not a panacea for transformational diplomacy. A year after the Secretary’s speech, Ryan Crocker, the new ambassador to Iraq, bluntly informed her that the U.S. embassy there lacked enough well-qualified staff members and “Simply put, we cannot do the nation’s most important work if we do not have the Department’s best people....In essence, the issue is whether we are a Department and a Service at war. If we are, we need to organize and prioritize in a way that reflects this, something we have not done thus far.”<sup>27</sup> To address the ambassador’s concern as well as the mission objective, the State Department staffed and continues to staff the mission in Iraq by capitalizing on the skill sets of its entire worldwide talent pool – its FS Generalists, Foreign Service (FS) Specialists, Civil Service and LE Staff. In addition, Afghanistan and other hardship missions are being staffed by this diverse talent pool.

The State Department has but one asset and it is their human asset. As of September 30, 2008, there are approximately 58,073 State Department employees. Approximately 6,691 FS Generalists, 4,965 FS Specialists, 9,328 Civil Servants, and 37,089 LE staff<sup>28</sup> work together in support of the foreign policy goals for our nation. To put this number into perspective, Secretary of Defense Gates recently noted that the entire diplomatic corps of 6,700 FS Generalists is less than the manning for one aircraft carrier strike group,<sup>29</sup> and allegedly, less than the number of military band members.<sup>30</sup> For even broader comparison, there are approximately 1.6 million active-duty military personnel, nearly 1.6 million members of the Reserves and National Guard, and 673,000 civilian employees in the Defense Department.<sup>31</sup>

FS Generalists (otherwise referred to as FS Officers or diplomats) are hired to work in positions covering five career tracks: consular, economic, management, political, or public diplomacy. FS Specialists are hired to provide technical, security, and administrative support overseas in areas such as medicine, financial management, information technology or law enforcement. Civil Servants for domestic assignments, with limited opportunities to serve overseas, and locally engaged staff, predominantly foreign-national, local employees for missions overseas, are both hired for a wide spectrum of positions.

Unfortunately, the current focus of staffing shortages of the State Department focuses is on only one component of the Department, the FS Generalist. What is lacking is a total mission perspective. Increasing just one component of the Department without a comprehensive personnel review of its entire mission will only continue shortages that have existed for years. Currently, the talent pool of the entire

Department of State workforce – its Generalists, Specialists, Civil Servants and LE Staff- are being utilized to staff Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hardship missions. This creates a culture of distinctions rather than teamwork. This transformation needs to place focus in the areas of identifying future leaders, cultural diversity, recruitment, training, congressional and public relations, and building traditions.

### Identifying Future Leaders

During his tenure Secretary Powell ultimately wanted to change the culture within the Department to one more focused on leadership. He explained to his employees, “I am more interested in leadership, than I am management. Management is easy; leadership is motivating people, turning people on, getting 110 percent out of a personal relationship. Management is a science, leadership is an art, and I will be interested in identifying those people who are leaders, who really know how to turn people on.”<sup>32</sup>

Initially utilized in an ad hoc basis, the Department later implemented a “360-Degree feedback” system, a tool to provide insight on employees from peers, subordinates, and supervisors, for both career developmental and assignment purposes. If effectively implemented the “360-Degree feedback” can add significant value for self improvement. Rater anonymity promotes feedback candor, and keeping a target individual’s results confidential enhances the safety that is so important for personal growth.<sup>33</sup> The immediate concern of many practitioners is that the value of the feedback for learning and development is compromised if conditions of psychological safety such as feedback confidentiality and rater anonymity are removed, particularly in an organization where there are concerns over issues of trust, candor and openness of communication.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the Department has distorted from the true purpose of

this effective tool by expanding its usage to accumulate evidence on whether a nominee should be selected for leadership positions, such as ambassadors and Deputy Chief of Mission.<sup>35</sup> The Department believes this process identifies whether the nominee has the required leadership qualities and now uses it for placement of all FS employees. It has been used as a means of weeding out candidates as well as establishing an environment that challenges an employee's due process.

The "360-Degree Feedback" process is an effective leadership development tool when properly applied. Improper use can be both detrimental to the employee and the institution, particularly if it hinders an employee's due process and trust within an institution. During the selection process for filling positions, particularly leadership positions, the Department should reconsider its application of the "360-Degree Feedback" tool and take heed to the cautionary warning amongst practitioners themselves.

### Cultural Diversity

During Secretary Rice's January 2006 speech at Georgetown University, she tellingly observed:

In order for America to fully play its role in the world, it must send out into the world a diplomatic force, a diplomatic corps that reflects that diversity. It cannot be that the last three Secretaries of State – the daughter of European immigrants, the son of Jamaican immigrants and a daughter of the American segregated south – would be more diverse than the Foreign Service with which they work... We cannot do it without America's best and brightest, and America's "best and brightest" come in all colors, they come in all religions, they come in all heritages. Our Foreign Service has got to be that way, too.<sup>36</sup>

Congress has also noted its concerns about the lack of cultural diversity within the State Department. In 2005, during Henrietta Fore's confirmation hearing as

Undersecretary for Management, a key State Department management position, Senator Barack Obama allowed her nomination to go forward only after securing a commitment from Fore to expand diversity at the State Department.<sup>37</sup> Then in June 2007, when Fore was nominated to replace the Deputy Secretary of State for Foreign Assistance, Senator Obama and Senator Robert Menendez joined together in expressing reservation about the nomination due to little progress being made on diversity issues at the Department. Senator Menendez stated, “I’m not particularly impressed with the State Department’s representation of minorities in general...” and “In my view, this is the worst department of all the departments in the federal government in the reflection of those minorities in the service.” Senator Obama also noted that “the overall promotion rate for African Americans and Hispanics decreased from 2005 to 2006.”<sup>38</sup> Though the lack of cultural diversity issue within the State Department was raised in both of these Congressional confirmation hearings, Henrietta Fore was confirmed twice to key management positions.

Additionally, in the June 2008 issue of the *Foreign Service Journal*, Susan Hovanec, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer with more than 30 years of experience, boldly addressed the treatment of women at the Department of State in her article, “Where Have All the Senior-level Women Gone?” As Hovanec noted, “Women are entering the Foreign Service in large numbers, but few make it to the top.” In most gatherings of Senior Foreign Service officers today, men still outnumber women three to one. Recently Secretary Rice stated: “I have lamented that I can go into a meeting at the Department of State – and as a matter of fact I can go into a whole day of meetings at the Department of State – and actually rarely see somebody who looks like me. And

that is just not acceptable,” Rice said.<sup>39</sup> The Secretary reiterated this point during an interview on November 9, 2008.<sup>40</sup> Yet, she and other Departmental leaders have done little to make Department of State more culturally diverse.

In the year 2008, the question has to be asked why America’s Department of State, the agency that represents Americans in cultures across the world, can’t address this lack of diversity issue within itself. To address this issue, diversity needs to be tracked throughout the entire process: recruitment, retention and promotion. The most immediate step to address this diversity issue is for Department management to deem it a priority. Measures must be taken by the Department to aggressively track and disclose the percentage breakdown at least annually per category; and to institutionally identify and remove the roadblocks hindering such progress throughout the process, obtaining and addressing honest feedback along the way.

### Recruitment Process

Under current Departmental guidelines, to become a Foreign Service Generalist, a candidate must successfully pass a written and oral examination. Upon successfully completing the written exam, those who pass the oral exam become conditional officers and receive a ranking score based on an oral-exam performance and language skills. The higher the rank, the sooner they are hired. Of the 12,000 to 15,000 applicants who register annually for the written exam, only about 450 officers are hired each year.<sup>41</sup> With only 3 or 4 percent offered a position from those that apply the profession has obtained a reputation of one being elitist,<sup>42</sup> and one not representative of the America it serves.

In 2006, the Department enlisted the consulting firm McKinsey to assess this hiring practice. The one significant missing element from the Department's hiring process, routine in the private sector, was a long, close look at experience and background early in the hiring process, a "Total Candidate" approach. The Department's Director General agreed with this recommendation; this approach was "aimed at discerning a full range of qualities that may make a candidate particularly well suited for FS work" – not simply exam scores. As a result, in 2007, a new system was implemented. Before 2007, every candidate who passed the written test was invited to the oral assessment. Now, there is a new gate each candidate must successfully pass through to be invited to the orals: the Qualifications Evaluation Panel. Therefore, once again, taking into account experience and background only after an applicant passes the difficult written examination process.<sup>43</sup> This was contrary to the Director General's stated goal.

However, this new process has not been embraced. "The Total Candidate approach makes sense, in principle," American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) State Vice President Steve Kashkett stated in a June 2008 Foreign Service Journal article about the FS Officer hiring process. "It has always seemed silly to many of our members that the initial – and most important – step in weeding out candidates for the Foreign Service was based solely on doing well on a general knowledge written examination, much of which had nothing to do with foreign affairs. Instead, I think it is reasonable to look at things like proven overseas experience, as well."<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, the Department continues to use the test as its primary hiring tool.

However, the examination is not used for other employees. FS Specialists must pass an oral assessment but not a written exam. Civil Servants are hired using the same process used throughout the entire government. LE Staff are hired using a local interview process to work at a specific mission overseas. Only FS Generalists enter the Department of State through the written exam recruitment process, a process that sets up a caste system with FS Generalists at the top.

Many potential recruits just won't take the current FS exam because it is a laborious process.<sup>45</sup> Others are discouraged when taking it as they don't see the relevance to the real world by taking a general knowledge written examination.<sup>46</sup> Even others question whether the current written exam process effectively identifies the talent pool needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century foreign policy challenges,<sup>47</sup> a recruitment process not used by any other government agency today.

The Department currently faces a critical shortage of about 1,000 FS Generalists and many embassies operating at 70 percent of their required staffing. If the Congress authorized additional personnel to fill these positions tomorrow, despite an overwhelming influx of untrained new hires, the current recruitment process would be a lengthy one. Moreover, it is highly debatable as to whether the current process recruits candidates with the skills, and cultural diversity, needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century foreign policy challenges that the Department of State confronts.

To address this overseas staffing shortage, one mechanism that could be utilized is to offer some of these positions to those already within the Department by revamping the personnel conversion process for Generalists, Specialists, and Civil Servants. Many current interested employees are trained and experienced with proven commitment and



talents. However, the current system needs to be more transparent in its selection process and expanded from its limited use. This effort would be beneficial to the Department by enhancing the professional development of, and commitment from, the selected employees, and exemplify the “one mission, one team” concept presented previously.

Other mechanisms to address this staffing shortage would be to increase the percentage of interagency details, particularly from Department of Defense, and the hiring of retiring military officers. Realizing there could be sensitivity to a perceived “militarization” of State Department, this mechanism needs to be approached from the pragmatic perspective it offers. There is a major staffing shortage at the State Department. Military officers are aware of this deficiency and see a mission that needs assistance for it to succeed, not a Department that needs to be conquered. They want the opportunity to volunteer as a detailee or to start a second career, and to assist State in transitioning to the key, vital instrument of the national security that it needs to be. By offering more detail opportunities, a cultural understanding is being shared. By offering second-career opportunities to retiring military officers, State Department rapidly addresses its current staffing shortage and obtains experienced well-trained, particularly in needed leadership and management skills, service-oriented personnel to represent the Nation and the Department’s mission.

### Training

When Colin Powell assumed the position of secretary, he quickly assessed that the Department of Defense afforded its personnel far more training than the Department of State. The changes he made were beyond curriculum changes at the Department’s

National Foreign Affairs Training Center (NFATC). Foreign language training opportunities were significantly expanded; information technology, public diplomacy, and crisis management training was dramatically improved, and a distance learning system with nearly 4,000 course options for overseas personnel was established. The most significant training innovation during the Powell era was the establishment of mandatory leadership and management training. To remedy what Secretary Powell considered to be a serious deficiency, he established a policy, still in place, that required leadership and management training as a prerequisite for all promotions after 2006.<sup>48</sup> This was a monumental step for the Department. As Dawn Frick, the management coordinator at NFATC, observed, “we’re involved in a culture change – from a culture that didn’t support leadership training and development to one that values, enforces and practices sound leadership up and down through the chain.”<sup>49</sup>

At that time, Ambassador Prudence Bushnell, dean of the Leadership and Management School at NFATC warned that introducing training and leadership into the Department’s culture would not inculcate without the support of employees at all levels.<sup>50</sup> Apparently her insight proved correct, since in June 2008 AFSA President John Naland suggested that the next re-engineering of the personnel system should import the military’s enormously successful commitment to training and professional education. He recommended that in addition to setting career-long training requirements, a law was needed to establish a 15-percent training float so that employees could take such training.<sup>51</sup> Other critics, such as Robert Roulston, a Regional Security Officer assigned at Embassy Caracas, noted that a one-week leadership course at the Department’s training center is a flimsy foundation compared to

how much time, education and scrutiny military officers are afforded before they are given command of personnel and resources.<sup>52</sup>

At the time of Secretary Powell's tenure, the policy requiring the completion of the one-week leadership for promotion was indeed supported and adopted, and is in place still today. This one-week leadership training requirement was a start, but it does not compare to the training received by the military at their lengthy, extensive, and intensive mid-career and senior-level joint professional military education programs. There is no challenge to the necessity and requirement for Congressional support to ensure that the Department is adequately funded and staffed to implement and participate in such programs. However, though not at the number of students the Department would prefer to send, there are a few Department employees that complete such premium training. Unfortunately, the Department does not currently track the professional development of these few employees to ensure they are strategically placed in leadership positions within the Department to capitalize upon the education they have received.

Both Naland and Roulston also addressed the appointment of individuals to leadership positions, such as ambassadors, within the national security apparatus, and their qualifications.<sup>53</sup> An ambassador is, upon Senate confirmation, the President's representative in the designated country and leads the applicable interagency country team. It is the President's prerogative to nominate a career or a non-career individual to this position. Though a higher percentage of ambassadors are career officers, particularly in today's security environment, most likely all ambassadors will have all the instruments of national power represented in their country team.

By requiring senior career Department officials to complete senior-level War College education before submitting their name to the White House for ambassadorial consideration would create an incentive currently missing within the Department to inculcate a culture of leadership. As it is the President's prerogative to nominate a non-career as well as career employee for ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission candidates considered to work with a non-career ambassador should have completed the senior-level War College education. Having the current one-week leadership training requirement supplemented by this requirement for senior level education would create a culture of strategic leadership within the Department of State.

### Congressional Relations

When Secretary Powell took office in 2001 the relationship between Capitol Hill and the Department was a troubled one. Secretary Powell directed that improving congressional relations was top priority as he understood and respected the Hill's oversight duties and "power of the purse" function. Improved relations was particularly important for State's Bureau of Legislative Affairs, the conduit between Congress and State, which facilitates interaction between lawmakers and State Department officials. During Powell's tenure, this office internally restructured its congressional portfolio coverage, established training sessions on congressional relations for Department employees, and most importantly, established a liaison office within the House of Representatives for better communication with that body.<sup>54</sup>

The long-term benefit to the Department that accrued must be cultivated. One such way would be for the Department to capitalize upon professional development opportunities regarding Capitol Hill. Every year, a dozen State Department employees

spend a year gaining legislative experience by working as congressional staff.<sup>55</sup> During this valuable time, employees obtain specialized skill sets regarding the legislative process, understanding its unique culture, and most importantly, developing crucial contacts and relationships that foster both trust and collaboration. Unfortunately, when the employees return from their congressional assignments, the Department does not place them in positions to capitalize upon this specialized experience. A reasonable option for a follow-on assignment would be within the Bureau of Legislative Affairs.

Establishing trusted and collaborative relationships with the Hill is essential, as is understanding and working through the difference of positions within State Department bureaucracy to avoid presenting a mixed message to the Hill. Equally important is an understanding of the sensitivities between the authorizers and appropriators, between the committee of jurisdiction and one of interest, and of the importance of being as responsive to a congressional staff, regardless of party affiliation, in addition to the member. Non-career employees in the Bureau of Legislative Affairs may indeed have a solid understanding of the congressional culture, but not so solid an understanding of the inner workings within the Department, particularly of all the offices and bureaus having a vested interest on any particular issue. This is another reason the Department should capitalize upon employees with Hill experience.

Another measure to pursue again would be opening a liaison office in the Senate. The liaison office on the House side has been effective in developing and strengthening relations with that chamber. However, for anyone who has worked on the Hill, expecting the needs of the Senate to be satisfied without a presence on their side is

unrealistic. Customer-service convenience is paramount, as exemplified by the locations of the military liaison presence on the Hill.

### American People

During the 1991 Gulf War, Joint Chief of Staff Chairman Powell rocketed to a trusted, celebrity status amongst the American people by keeping them apprised on the status of the conflict. As Secretary of State Powell continued this commitment to the American people by maintaining this dialog and expected the same from the entire Department, whether overseas or domestic. In any relationship true dialog must be based on mutual trust. To build such trust, Secretary Powell and other State officials spoke to the American people through media, in classrooms or at civic organizations, virtually every day, across the country. The *Secretary's Home Town Diplomat* program encouraged personnel returning from abroad to speak at schools and civic associations in their hometowns.<sup>56</sup>

One approach to strengthen this established outreach effort would be to utilize and capitalize upon one of the Department's crucial assets, its retiree community. To further develop this connection to our fellow Americans, the Department should consider establishing an honorary "retiree Ambassador" to coordinate and follow-up such applicable outreach opportunities and efforts in every state. This honorary "Ambassador" selectee should not be restricted to whether the individual was an Ambassador previously. Instead the retiree selected should be based on the individual's commitment to educating their fellow citizens about their diplomats and what Department employees do to serve them worldwide.

## Building Traditions

Sometimes it is the little actions that can mean so much, and sometimes it is when those little actions are routinely conducted that a tradition is born. For example, due to State Department's longstanding relationship with the Marine Corps, every year on November 10, Marines worldwide share their annual birthday cake with their embassy colleagues. The first piece is shared between the youngest and oldest Marine present. This tradition means very much to the Marines, as well as those sharing the moment with them. It symbolizes their commitment and dedication to the future while at the same time commemorates their history and past. Unfortunately, State Department does not have many such traditions.

On September 15, 1789, Congress established the oldest executive department of the federal government, the Department of State.<sup>57</sup> Starting a tradition similar to our Marine colleagues by having a birthday ceremony on September 15 of every year, worldwide, in every embassy and stateside facility would be a sensible step. It commemorates the oldest federal agency, of which the State Department should be proud, and it also serves as a reminder of its traditions and gives thanks to the Department's entire workforce. As simple as the gesture may be, what it symbolizes is more telling: an institution that takes a moment to reflect and appreciate.

Additionally, when military colleagues get promoted they have a recognition ceremony. As their promotions are based on future leadership potential, not just past performance, when given their new rank insignia and award, they reflect upon their past and restate commitment to their future, institution, and nation. Employees at the State Department, particularly those in the Foreign Service, get informed of their promotion by

simply reading their name on a cable. There is no recognition ceremony, no award, and no recommitment to their future, their institution and their nation.

### Conclusion

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been study after study critical of the mounting internal management vulnerabilities and challenges within the supposed principal and essential foreign policy agency, the Department of State. The cause for its such dire condition does not belong to one Administration, one political party, one branch of government, one national security apparatus, one Secretary of State, one national security institution or one American people; instead it belongs to all. It will take all, collectively, to repair it. However, most of all, to truly fix the current internal management vulnerabilities and challenges within the Department of State, it will take leadership of and within the Department of State itself.

When Secretary Powell left the Department of State in January 2005, he left the institution in a far stronger position than he found it. In light of this new window of opportunity, the Department of State under a new Administration and a new Secretary of State needs to reflect upon and re-adopt the Powell leadership principles. And just like then, to truly make the changes needed to transform the Department of State, it will take the commitment of the new Secretary of State, her appointed staff and the internal stakeholders of the Department of State, its employees.

### Endnotes

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<sup>4</sup> Michelle L. Stefanick. The author has worked twenty-one years at the Department of State as a Civil Servant (Office of Inspector General and on limited appointment overseas at the Embassies in Cameroon and Kenya), as a Foreign Service Specialist (Financial Management Officer in Russia and Washington), and in Foreign Service Generalist positions (Management Officer in Sudan and senior congressional advisor in Bureau of Legislative Affairs). Michelle worked on a detail assignment as an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow with Senator Olympia Snowe and currently attends the U.S. Army War College as a student.

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