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Centralization of Authority in Defense Organizations
Samuel P. Huntington

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Centralization of Authority in Defense Organizations

Samuel P. Huntington

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What I would like to do today is to elaborate briefly on some of the points that are in the article I published last year, "Defense Organization and Military Strategy."* The issue of organization and reorganization of the Department of Defense's central command and chain of command, along with the way it does its business, will be with us for a considerable period of time. As most of you know, this issue came to the fore about three years ago when General David C. Jones published an article** criticizing the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) setup as he was leaving office as Chairman of the JCS.

Other critics such as General Edward C. Meyer (former Army Chief of Staff) immediately followed suit, and in the years since, we've had a series of Congressional hearings — almost continuously — which, last fall, produced a piece of legislation that I wouldn't call exactly inconsequential, but that comes pretty close. It made some modest changes in the legislated organizational structure of the Department of Defense.

The conference committee report that produced the bill legislating those changes also required top officials in the defense establishment — the Secretary, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the service chiefs, and other people — to answer a rather elaborate questionnaire concerning organization of the Department of Defense by March 1, 1985. Presumably those answers will provide the basis for additional hearings if the Armed Services Committee of either House wants to follow up. And certainly, it was the intention of several people, including most notably Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Representative Les Aspin (D-WI), Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, as well as others, that this subject not be allowed to die with the passage of the Nichols Bill* in September of 1984.

There's been monumental indifference to reorganization of the Department of Defense on the administration's part and, at times, rather articulate hostility

*Published in *The Public Interest*, Spring 1984, pp. 20-47.

**"Why the Joint Chiefs of Staff Must Change," *Armed Forces Journal International*, March 1982.

*PL 98-525, Title XIII, October 19, 1984, 98 Stat. 2611.

coming from the Secretary of Defense and people around him. One can understand the indifference, since the Secretary of Defense can legitimately feel he has other priorities, including the military budget, weapons systems issues, and other things ranking considerably higher than tinkering with the way his office and associated offices work. There is also an argument articulated by Fred Iklé, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, that organization isn't terribly important after all; that with the right people, any organizational structure can function. Consequently, Iklé believes it is almost a waste of time to tinker with organization. If he is right, however, then clearly an awful lot of people — important people, busy people, powerful people — have been concerned with inconsequential issues, and have, in effect, been wasting their time.

The behavior of top national security decision makers indicates that organization is important. That is clear from the memoirs of people who have been National Security Advisor and Secretary of State. For example, the first thing that Henry Kissinger or Zbigniew Brzezinski did on Inauguration Day when they were National Security Advisor or that Alexander Haig did when he was Secretary of State, was to stick a piece of paper under the newly sworn in President's nose, and ask him to sign a presidential directive setting up or defining the national security policy-making structure for his administration. When Kissinger and Brzezinski got their papers signed, they were very happy, but Cyrus Vance was terribly unhappy when Brzezinski's paper was signed, and Haig was furious because the President didn't sign his piece of paper. Presumably, that indicates that these people must think that organization is of some importance. And, of course, if it is unimportant, certainly during the past several months, John F. Lehman, Jr., Secretary of the Navy, has been charging about denouncing proposed changes in the defense system for no good reason.

If one looks at the history of organization and decision-making, one can see that the decision making process — whether the authority to make decisions rests with an individual or with a committee, whether entities are set up to report in one way or another, whether an organization is structured in one way or another, or whether or not there's autonomy given to a particular organization or part of it — makes a lot of difference.

One very interesting study done two years ago for the Director of Net Assessment in the Pentagon, Andrew W. Marshall, relates the differences in development of naval aviation during the 1920s and 1930s among the major naval powers to precisely the differences in their organizations. In the U.S. a group of Congressmen and civilian leaders became convinced of the importance of naval aviation early on. They convinced Congress to create, against the wishes of the most important admirals in the Navy, a Bureau of Aviation, which, by legislation, had to be headed by an aviator and was given a very distinct position in the Naval hierarchy. In Great Britain, on the other hand, naval aviation was folded into the Royal Air Force (RAF). Obviously, an officer in the RAF didn't particularly want to go on detached duty to try to learn how to fly off an aircraft carrier; an RAF officer's future was elsewhere. In the Royal Navy, meanwhile, there really wasn't any interest or any incentive to learn anything about aviation. The Japanese came along later and eventually created a bureau of aviation near the end of the 1920s, but considerably after we did. The study argues that the significant differences which existed in the development of carrier aviation between the United States on the one hand, and Great Britain and Japan on the other, can be at least partly accounted for by this difference in organization.

One other point that I think is germane now and in coming years is that there will be an increasing crunch on the Defense Department's budget. Historically, issues concerning defense establishment organization generally come to the fore when pressure is on the budget, for very understandable reasons. If the budget has been expanding, as it obviously has for the past several years, there is not great pressure to worry about whether one has the most effective and efficient organization for expending the money. But if the lid goes on or funds are cut back as they were after World War II and again in the early 1950s after the Korean War build-up, then organizational issues and the allocation of funds become much more important, and quite naturally, political leaders become more concerned about getting as much as they can.

As I'm sure you all know, a wide variety of concerns have been raised in the past few years about U.S. defense organization, and since I summarized those in my article, I won't attempt to elaborate on them here. I think it's important to note that those

deficiencies, or alleged deficiencies, that have been debated in public recently are ones that have figured in almost every significant study of the Defense Department, official or unofficial, since the 1950s. They were precisely the deficiencies that led President Eisenhower to attempt a major reorganization of the department in 1958,* and to succeed in getting a modest reorganization that people, nonetheless, thought had cured some of the major problems. In fact, as report after report during the 1960s and 1970s made clear, the same problems continued, and the Department of Defense has changed very little in terms of basic organizational structure since the early 1960s.

In effect, the evolution of the organization of the Department of Defense has gone through two phases: one beginning at the end of World War II and extending through the early McNamara years, when there was a tendency toward increasing centralization on the civilian side, and relatively little change on the military side — albeit some change. This was followed by a period from the early 1960s to the early 1980s, when there was relatively little change anywhere in terms of organizational structure and relationships.

We are now moving into a third phase where there very probably will be some significant changes. But unlike the first phase when the changes were mostly on the civilian side and strengthened the authority of the Secretary, the focus of these changes will be, to a much greater extent, on the military side. There is a desire to strengthen the authority of the central military institutions in the Department of Defense, most particularly the powers of those members perceived as being divorced in some way or another from the services — the Chairman and the unified and specified commanders.

A further factor that plays into all of this and that obviously is a highly debatable one is the difficulty the U.S. has had in conducting successful military operations. After all, with one exception — the triviality of which only underlines the point — we haven't won a war since 1945. We have also suffered a variety of miscarriages using military force in more limited ways, including the *Pueblo* incident, Son Tay, the *Mayaguez*, the Iranian hostages, and Beirut. Consequently, the perception of our ability to utilize our military force, as a result of the accumulation of these incidents, is at a rather low ebb. Our successful conquest of Grenada hasn't changed that, since more questions — in many respects very real questions — have been raised concerning our effectiveness in that operation: the way it was planned (recognizing it was planned under very short deadlines), and the way the command arrangements were structured on the island. The whole conduct of the Grenada operation has simply reinforced the picture that our command relationships are not set up to employ military force effectively.

At the same time that the Grenada operation was under way, similar questions were being raised about the Beirut tragedy. One of the most peculiar, frightening things was the problem of pinning down responsibility for what happened. In the end, the President said it was really his responsibility, which meant that it was no one's responsibility, and that, in fact, is an extraordinary conclusion. It was obviously reinforced by the fact that a Marine detachment was at the Beirut airport, the commander of which had to report up through this very complicated chain of command to the Sixth Fleet and then to European Command (EUCOM) headquarters, to General Bernard W. Rogers, SACEUR. Yet quite clearly, the extent to which the European command and others were directly involved and concerned with what happened on the ground in Beirut was rather limited.

You may remember that after the incident, General P. X. Kelley, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, was sent to survey the situation. He came back and reported that what happened there really wasn't his worry. He said, "I am chartered by law to organize, train, and equip the U.S. Marine Corps. We hand forces over to the operational command for its use." So, in effect he's saying, "Well, General Rogers, it's really your fault, yours and your supporting commanders."

The fact of the matter is that the European Command had very little control over the Marines in Beirut. In many other situations, certainly in World War II, or certainly in Korea, and I would suspect in Vietnam, if gross negligence on somebody's part had been apparent concerning the proper security precautions during an incident, somebody would have been summarily relieved of command. And yet, that didn't happen. General Rogers and his deputy at EUCOM

* *U.S. Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958*, PL 85-599, 72 Stat 514, August 6, 1958.

don't have the authority to relieve anybody of command. That is part of the problem with which we are dealing.

I don't want to continue in detail about the various perceived deficiencies, though they tend, as you know, to focus on the role of the JCS. The focus is on the difficulty the JCS has in performing an effective planning role, the weakness of the Chairman, the problems faced in resource allocation and weapons acquisition, the problems in the operations of planning, programming, and budgeting systems. They also focus on the chain of command in terms of the problems to which I just referred: the effort to maintain the distinction, so close to President Eisenhower's heart, between the operational command belonging to the unified and specified commanders and the administrative command belonging to the services. As General Kelley said, the services are the trainers and the providers of military forces, but not the users of military forces.

As I indicated in my article, I think that is a distinction that, while theoretically neat, is not worthwhile to maintain in practice under all circumstances. Before I briefly discuss some of the proposed solutions to these perceived problems, it may be useful for me to compare how we organize our defense establishment to the way other countries organize their defense establishments.

Just about a year ago, we had a very interesting conference here at the Center for International Affairs for which we prepared papers on the evolution of defense establishments since World War II in six countries including the U.S. The other five countries were the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), the United Kingdom, Israel, and Canada. The missions of the armed forces for each of these six countries are very different. Some have very small armed forces, and some have highly complex ones as in the cases of the Soviet Union and the U.S. There are a variety of other differences, and perhaps one of the most important is the extent to which the armed forces have a relatively simple, unitary mission compared to a very diverse, complex mission.

In theory, the Soviet armed forces and our armed forces have very complex missions. The German armed forces have a very simple mission; they must defend Germany against the Warsaw Pact, and that's the only serious thing they have to worry about. The Israeli armed forces at least used to have a very comparable and simple mission, to defend Israel. For a decade or more, of course, they have been taking on problems of dealing with occupied territories and taking a more active role in retaliation. In any case, what seems more significant than the armed forces' size is the diversity and complexity of the armed forces' mission.

Equally important is the extent to which countries can be distinguished between two categories. First, those where essentially one service is dominant. One might call these the continental powers — the Soviet Union, Israel and West Germany. Second, those where there is a greater degree of service pluralism and equality. One might call these the insular powers — the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Despite all the differences in these cases, since World War II the trend has been towards increasing centralization. The continental powers in particular have highly centralized armed forces, but even with the insular powers, there is a very well-defined series of progressions toward greater centralization. In fact, one can say that there is a series of steps through which countries have evolved in centralizing control over their military establishments. As we, the British, and the Canadians went through these steps, in some cases one country would be ahead in terms of taking the next step, while in other cases one of the other countries would be ahead.

If one begins with an assumption of separate land and sea service departments each having its own minister and chief of staff, then the next step is to create an air ministry with a minister and a chief of staff. Then, because there are three services, a chiefs of staff committee is created, as the British did in 1924, and as we did in 1942, to discuss and to deal with issues of common concern to all military services. At some point, the next step — I guess this would be step three — a defense minister is created, not a ministry, but a minister, who is a political coordinator. Well, he always ends up having an impossible task, of course, so at some point there is not only a minister of defense, but also a chairman of the chiefs of staff committee. Then, in order to support the minister of defense and make his life somewhat more bearable, a defense ministry evolves, which supports the minister of defense, and the service ministers get removed from the cabinet. And then, in the next step, one finds a situation wherein the chairman of the chiefs of staff committee acquires

greater power over the other chiefs of staff, and replaces in fact, in name, or both, the chiefs of staff as the principal military advisor to the government.

Meanwhile, another step has usually already taken place: the gradual centralization of control over support services. New central bodies are created to handle the civilian personnel, logistics, and administration. Then, and this is a most important step, the chairman of the chiefs of staff committee is converted into chief of the defense staff, and he gets control over the central interservice staff working for the chiefs of staff, which then becomes his staff, not the committee's staff. Immediately following that step, the service ministers are abolished, then the service chiefs of staff are abolished. Neither the U.S. nor the U.K. have reached this point yet, although the U.K.'s latest reorganization brings them very close to it. Ultimately, a central staff is organized purely on functional lines. By looking at these steps of gradual centralization, one can see that we are about halfway through the series, while the British are coming to the end of it.

It would behoove us to look more closely at the British experience in this regard, as well as that of other countries. One of the things that came through most strikingly in this comparative analysis was the weakness of the U.S. central military organization. It was the weakest of the six countries, and I'm sure this would be true compared to other countries that have significant armed forces as well. I know of no other major country, for instance, that still has service ministers. So, that's one side of the comparison showing where we stand in terms of the power of central military institutions relative to other countries. There's another side to the point, however.

Student: Excuse me. Before going into that, isn't there something within our own society's attitude about not having either a German or a Prussian general staff, and having civilian control over the military? Civilian control seems to be a strong force to prevent a strong military central control over our services, one that may not have existed in other countries.

Huntington: Well, I think that is certainly one control mechanism. That was just the point I was going to make. The other one that is related to your comments is very clear, at least in a comparison of the U.S. system to those of these other countries. Civilians play a very restricted role in the formulation of military policy in these other countries, and this is more true in the Soviet Union, in Israel, or in Germany than in Great Britain or Canada. In most of these countries there is a system in which the military leaders, the heads of the armed services and the chairman or chief of the central defense staff, hold a very tight control over the military side. The civilian civil servants are restricted to dealing with the logistical and administrative support operations. And as most of these cases pertain to a parliamentary system, the number of people considering defense policy in an important way is very limited. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Defense, the chief of the central defense staff, and the Finance Minister would all be involved. But beyond that, there wouldn't be a great deal of participation by other people. On occasion defense would be debated in Parliament, but, as is true of any properly working parliamentary system, invariably the government would be upheld.

The actual policy-making is carried on by an extraordinarily small number of people, and in the shaping of that policy, the military tends to play a much more dominant role than it does in the United States, where, for the reasons you suggested, there is this very broad participation of civilians. Ours is a highly pluralistic system. Of course, our independent legislature insists upon playing an active and powerful role. In that sense, the distinctiveness of the U.S. setup is underlined, and these two concepts — pluralism and civilian control — go together. The pluralistic involvement in the shaping of U.S. defense policy, by Congress, interest groups, defense intellectuals, and other people, is something that does not exist anywhere else.

Student: Do you consider this lack of centralization in the U.S. an asset or a liability?

Huntington: I think it has problems. It is a partial cause of some of the deficiencies to which I alluded previously. But the problem doesn't reside in the fact of decentralization as such, it resides in the nature of the decentralization. As I indicated in my article, the basic problem is what I label "servicism." In the absence of a stronger central military institution, the power basically resides with the services. And that has all sorts of consequences such as the way decisions are made, the way programs are developed or which programs are developed or not developed, and the way military operations are carried out, as well as the fact that if there is a military operation of any

size, no matter how small, all four services have to be cut into it in one way or another, as was the case in Grenada.

I think it is wrong to refer to the problem in the U.S. defense establishment as interservice competition or rivalry, because that's only part of it. If competition or rivalry exists among the services — as it did in the '40s and the '50s, which at times got rather vicious — there's a way to deal with that. Any economist would predict how it would be handled in an oligopolistic situation: the parties get together and collaborate. As a result, the problem is not just interservice rivalry now as much as it is the apparent solution to that rivalry: interservice collusion. Both of these are manifestations of this servicism phenomenon that permeates the U.S. defense establishment.

Oettinger: May I just interject a thought before you go further? One of the things about centralization abroad versus here is the concept of the Prussian general staff. It seems to me, according to the history of who did what around the end of the 19th century, that the innovations in the U.S. centered around the railroads. Now, my impression is that some of the things associated with the Prussian general staff were, in fact, at least as a strong component, of U.S. invention — particularly in connection with the railroad and with clustered military operations during the Civil War — and were copied by Europeans. These innovations were elaborated on. But the notion that centralization and a centralized staff are fundamentally un-American doesn't strike me as holding up under historical scrutiny.

Huntington: Well, I wish I could agree with you, but I think that in some sense it's been very un-American.

Oettinger: Well, we'll put it as a question.

Huntington: After all, the Prussian general staff was created in the early 19th century and came to its peak of competence and authority later in the 19th century with Field Marshal Count Helmuth von Moltke. It wasn't until after the Spanish-American War that the U.S. Army tried to have a general staff. And, there was a knock-down, drag-out battle to get that through Congress, which was won by Elihu Root, Secretary of War. Even after it was created by legislation, there was a continuing battle between the first heads of the Army General Staff and Major General Fred C. Ainsworth, Adjutant General of the Army.

Ainsworth lead the opposition to the general staff, and he had a powerful post in the 19th century Army. Finally about 1915 or so, somebody forced him into retirement, but it took 15 years of vicious battling to create the Army General Staff in a relatively modest form, and to enable the chiefs of staff to assert their power over the other bureaus in the Army. The Army, like the Navy, was run on the bureau system, and the real power was in the various bureaus and branches. So I think we have a long history of decentralization.

Student: You said that the solution to this interservice rivalry ended up being interservice collusion. That would seem to carry a lot of other things on its back if it were collusion. Could you distinguish between collusion and cooperation?

Huntington: Interservice collaboration is both collusion and cooperation in a situation where there are four factions. If this were an economic situation, an economist could predict there would be cooperative, collaborative, or collusive behavior, however one wishes to describe it. The factions would want to share the market, to keep others out, to maintain each other's position without running afoul of each other. That is basically what the services do. The whole JCS system is designed to ensure that. All four chiefs must agree on virtually everything important and on what is unimportant. So it's cooperation, but I think overall it is also collusion.

Now, you can contrast the period since the early 1960s with what went on during the 1940s and 1950s when there was vicious interservice rivalry. A top general of the Army Air Force was describing the Marine Corps as a "bitched-up little Army talking Navy lingo" and Air Force and Army people were saying, "What do we need the Navy for? There's no one for it to fight." And, of course, in 1947 there weren't many enemies around for the Navy to fight. Navy people were responding in turn, and there were battles over the introduction of the so-called supercarriers.

We had never experienced such interservice disagreement before. Now suddenly they had obviously different interests. They have since learned to cooperate or collude and to divvy things up, each service chief counting on the others to back him up in turn after he backs them up. This period of collusion or cooperation has replaced the earlier one of intense, vicious, bureaucratic battling, and one can argue

about which is better or which is worse. As I indicated, they are both manifestations of a more deeply rooted problem in the sense that the power does lie with the services, and until a counterbalance is created to the services' power, there's either going to be intense rivalry or the friendly I'll-scratch-your-back, you-scratch-mine type of collusion.

Well, let me make a few comments on the proposals for changing these perceived deficiencies. As I mentioned, over the past few decades, a variety of studies have been made of the Department of Defense's organization, virtually all of which have argued to a greater or lesser degree for centralization. The Nichols Bill that was passed by Congress made some modest changes in the organization.

That bill essentially provided for five things. First, it gave the Chairman of the JCS statutory authorization to be the spokesman for the CINCs, for the unified and specified commands. While this provision was not necessary in order for him to carry out that role, it gave legislative blessing to the idea. Second, it gave the Chairman control of the JCS schedule in terms of bringing potentially important things before the JCS, although he already — as far as I can gather — had played a substantial role in determining the JCS schedule. Third, it provided, by legislation, that the Chairman should select the officers of the JCS on nomination of the services. This is one of those provisions that I think could be rather significant, if an aggressive Chairman wanted to use it and assert a power that hadn't been asserted before. However, it's unlikely that a Chairman would be terribly assertive with his power. I'll come back to this point in just a moment. Fourth, it extended the possible tour of JCS service for officers to four years. And fifth, it told the Secretary of Defense to make sure that the JCS would function as an independent staff, a rather vague declaration. It's not entirely clear what, if any, meaning that will have in practice.

This bill, I think, is more notable for what it didn't do. It didn't give the Chairman the power to manage the Joint Staff, and that was what many people expected. And it didn't say that he could, on his own, provide independent advice to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and to the National Security Council, instead of simply reporting the views of the Joint Chiefs. It didn't make him the principal military advisor to the President or the Secretary of Defense. It didn't give him a deputy, which is something many people had recommended. It didn't put him in the chain of command.

The chain of command down from the Secretary of Defense is not specified by law. But going back many years to Secretary McNamara, the chain of command has run from the President to the Secretary of Defense, then through the JCS to the unified and specified commanders. Many people argued that the Chairman should replace the JCS. The bill didn't — as some people argued it should and as a bill previously passed in the House had provided — place the Chairman on the National Security Council (NSC) as a formal statutory member. That's a bad idea. And it didn't give the chairman control over the promotions of people on the Joint Staff. That's a good idea.

I think you can see that if there is to be a Chairman of the JCS, then in terms of providing an alternative source of advice, an independent military viewpoint on defense policy to supplement the four service viewpoints, there needs to be some way to ensure that people on the Joint Staff will work with the Chairman, and not think primarily of their promotion prospects when they get back to their services. The only way that can be done is effectively to give the Chairman power over the future promotions of the people who worked on the Joint Staff, something which wouldn't be easy to do. Various people have various schemes which could move in that direction, but it would be a rather complicated thing to do.

Oettinger: In light of that, why did you mention earlier that his power to select the officers would be such a significant thing? Or did I misunderstand?

Huntington: Well, I said that could be, because, in effect, if the Chairman wanted to, he could select any officer that he wanted from any service to be on the Joint Staff.

Oettinger: But if he couldn't fiddle with their promotions?

Huntington: Well, there has to be both. And it's hard to conceive of the situation in which the Chairman would really exercise that appointive power very aggressively.

This gets back to the point Les Aspin often emphasizes. He says, "Look, the most we can do in Congress at the moment for political reasons is to open or make it possible for the Chairman to open doors. We can't force him to walk through." In 1958, there

was an act that gave the Secretary of Defense pretty sweeping authority over the Department of Defense; it opened the door, and Robert McNamara came along and didn't just walk through it, he plunged through it and exercised those powers to the utter limit.

With respect to the Chairman of the JCS, however, there's a different situation, because whoever's Chairman of the JCS will have grown up with and be accustomed to the existing system, and he will be thinking about his relationships with his colleagues on the Joint Chiefs. Unless he's a very unusual character — and these occasionally come along in the military — he will not want to charge through, knock heads, assert his authority and open all the doors that Congress has said could be opened. I think that's a very important point.

Student: Is part of the problem with giving the Chairman power over promotions that it must be done in perpetuity — for the rest of the time that person is in the service?

Huntington: Well, it's difficult to figure out just how to do it. One proposal, for instance, for promotions to brigadier general on up, suggested that the Chairman recommend to the President a certain portion of officers who would be promoted to the slots in each service. He would get 10-15 percent, or whatever percentage of the slots are his for which to recommend people.

Student: I'd like to see the Chairman have that promotional authority, but I know from military experience that although someone might not have that authority to promote, he sure can put a very quick end to someone's career.

Huntington: Well, you may be right. I'm not near the inner workings of the military personnel system; but all I know is there seems to be very broad agreement that the way staff officers behave is, to a very large extent, a reflection of the fact that their future careers are with the services, which is perfectly natural.

Student: One point that came out in your article was that to many folks, a joint assignment wouldn't be career-enhancing.

Huntington: Well, that's true.

Student: I saw that in the Army. People said, "Stay away — it's like going to recruiting commands; it's a death wish."

Huntington: Yes, that is alleged, and again, it's hard to support this with statistics, though some people have put some together. It's hard to distinguish what is cause and what is effect. But it is alleged that the services, by and large, tend to send their better officers, not to the Joint Staff, but to their own staff. Not that they send only poor officers to the Joint Staff, that clearly isn't the case, but they tend to give preference, as one would expect, to their own staffs.

Student: I was curious about the theoretical foundation of organizations. You seemed to imply earlier a premise that if one can't find someone to blame when something goes wrong, then one is not well-organized. Is that what you meant?

Huntington: Well, I think there ought to be a way of establishing responsibility. Again, I am speaking as a total outsider and as a person whose only direct experience with the military was serving as a very low status enlisted man in the Army transportation corps at the end of World War II. In that context, if you had a situation like what occurred in Beirut, clearly somebody was responsible. Without contrary evidence, one would assume that the local commanding officer had just not taken the proper precautions to protect his force, which clearly was vulnerable. Maybe one could argue that responsibility should rest someplace else, but I believe it would be with the lieutenant colonel, or with whoever was in command of that Marine detachment and who wasn't protecting his force properly. And if something like that had happened during World War II or Korea, I'm absolutely sure that officer would have been removed from command immediately and replaced by someone else. Then there would have been an investigation, but initially there would have been prompt action. Here, however, there is no responsibility.

Student: I'm still a little bit confused about that. Are you saying that it was in the nature of the previous organization, pre-CINC commands, prespecified and unified commands getting together, that responsibility was attributable? And now, with the system the way it is, responsibility in general is not attributable?

Huntington: I think it is very confused, but yes, that's basically correct. I think it is very confused because the Department of the Navy and the Marine Corps were reluctant to say something like, "We have a dolt out there who let his entire unit be destroyed this way."

General Rogers, who technically is the ultimate commanding officer, had no control over the situation, couldn't remove anyone, didn't have the authority to do so. That is a very bad way to divide responsibility. And if, as I suggest in my article, you're going to have a unified command, then the unified commander ought to be able to move people around, fire them, relieve them, and so forth. Now he doesn't have that authority.

Oettinger: That, by the way, was not the only instance of the notion that although the unified or specified commander is responsible for his troops' performance in terms of operational command, the authority for court martial and other disciplinary action, etc., rests with the home service. So, at the very least, there has to be some measure of negotiation. It's like living between a couple of the departments within a university; the questions of who's responsible and who's accountable get fuzzy. That's inherent in the system.

Student: Well, I believe there's a difference. It's hard to tell, perhaps, when there is a divergence between the willingness to discipline and the identification of those who could be disciplined. Second, it seems that there still is a problem of this theoretical rule whereby one is badly organized if one can't find people directly responsible whenever things go wrong in command or control situations. Is that how you want to reorganize? What rules are we using here?

McLaughlin: Let me address that. At least in terms of the civilian world organization — corporations, or whatever — one wants accountability. Whether it's P&L (Planning and Logisitics) responsibility or whatever else, one wants to be able to tell who's in charge of any particular function, or in any particular activity, at least if it's something important to the organization. If one can't find out who's accountable for big things that happen or for bad things that happen, one has a lousy organization.

Oettinger: Let me put it this way: I think the structure of the military organization flies in the face of received doctrine — there's nobody at the Harvard Business School, or any other school, who would say that a system where authority, accountability, and responsibility are divided makes any sense. Now, what happens in practice in the corporate world is another matter, but the dogma is fairly clear.

Huntington: It also flies in the face of the traditional military view on responsibility and accountability. Any division commander in World War II would have relieved that guy in Beirut of command immediately.

Student: I just would like to add what I think is an urgent example of the importance of accountability, particularly as it relates to legitimacy of the system. We saw an example of this just last year in Poland, when the four Polish officers were put on trial. It relates to the whole legitimacy of the system and the fact that somebody has to be held accountable. We can all agree, perhaps, that the system wasn't implicated properly, but the fact that there was a need to hold somebody accountable, even if one doesn't believe those held accountable were ultimately responsible, indicates that accountability was important to the whole legitimacy of the system. And I think that can be applied to many other situations.

As I understand your article and the thrust of your arguments, you propose it might be preferable to organize along functional lines as opposed to service lines to alleviate some of the present problems. You do note, however, that divisions along functional lines would not be without problems, either. In thinking about your argument, I was immediately attracted to it as a way to solve some of the problems that exist today.

Then I thought that divisions along functional lines would provide similar perverse incentives to hold on to missions that might become obsolete, or that should change over time. The problem with organizations is that they create bureaucratic inertia. For example, in Europe today we're thinking about replacing with conventional forces some missions currently performed by nuclear forces. How would that be affected if our forces were organized in a different manner? Would there be more disincentives to replace the nuclear missions with conventional forces? And, do you have some thoughts on ways to change those disincentives in reorganizing? How do you come out on balance, if there are trade-offs on both sides?

Huntington: Well, I think you make a very valid and

general point which is that any system of organization is imperfect. And if I understood you correctly, I think this is also true: any system becomes more imperfect over time. I'm not sure I would agree with your point about the increased problems with shifting from nuclear to conventional forces in Europe, however. But clearly, there are pros and cons on either side.

The point I was trying to make in my article was that given the existing situation, there is no significant entity reflecting our major strategic purposes. And, if there is to be a rational allocation of resources so that better decisions are made relative to the trade-offs between nuclear weapons and conventional weapons in Europe; between prepositioning equipment or moving forces or between relying on airlift and sealift to reinforce Europe, then the best way to get this is not under the existing system.

These issues are hashed out among the services, and quite clearly, the Air Force and the Navy aren't enthusiastic about providing ferry service for the Army. Instead, these issues could be hashed out within a structure for which a primary mission is the defense of Europe, and in which the guy in charge has a given budget to allocate. He would then have the incentive to try to get the most he could out of the money that he was given, and would choose, over time, the appropriate balance between these various alternatives, and would weigh the trade-offs between more of this, more of that, or more nuclear, more conventional, etc.

Oettinger: You said "solve." I think I would feel much more comfortable if folks used words like "live with," or "manage," because the notion that there is a possible solution is the enemy of sound analysis. If problems appear intractable because they are too large to manage, they must be carved up. Well, once carved and segmented, they have almost by definition been carved up the wrong way. So, the issues become the dynamics of situations where nothing is comfortable. Therefore, how do you structure the dynamics so that things don't get too rigid, so they don't become too large, so they remain manageable, yet won't fossilize in some wrong way? It seems to me that "live with," "manage," or whatever, are better ways of looking at such things than using problem and solution language. Such language implies a neatly ingrained viewpoint, which is the enemy of sound analysis.

Student: To return to the culpability issue in Beirut: I think our sense of outrage at the services in Beirut was no less than complete regarding the fact that there was no responsibility laid on the command there. I'd like to add that Colonel Timothy Geraghty, the commander of the Marine unit in the multinational peacekeeping force in Beirut, was, in fact, definitely headed for stars when he received that assignment, and is now the commanding officer of the gate guards at the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, and will probably retire quietly sometime this year. So I guess the internal workings of the service managed to impart responsibility, even though there was a perception that it was taken from the services by certain civilian leadership.

Huntington: Yes, that's a good point.

Student: I think there's a classic case of the same process in what we have in Korea right now. There are many border incidents where, if somebody screws up at some level, unless there's mitigating circumstances that determine there was confusion, or that there wasn't a clear order, or something like that, inevitably somebody's relieved, or moved out. It's done almost daily and weekly over there. Another important point is that in Korea you're talking about a unified command. You have all the services under U.S. Forces Korea working for General Robert W. Sennewald. Whenever the blame comes down it will be pinned very quickly, regardless of service relations. It is done very quickly and very well, whereas in other places you don't quite get that.

Oettinger: Yes, but that's a very informative case, because one of the ways that it was and is approached in Korea is that the commanding general is multiple-hatted. On the surface that looks completely ridiculous. You ask, "How can one individual discharge so many conflicting and illogical responsibilities?" It's a stroke of genius, because in such matters he only has to consult himself wearing another hat in order to undertake one of these actions. He doesn't have to fight the system. The Korean organizations are, to my mind, an elegant example of living within a system and making it come out better than what it deserves, by virtue of unbelievable multiple-hatting.

The fact is, a multiple-hatted commander can hold a meeting with himself, have the whole hierarchy inside one head, and write himself a couple of memoranda. As Army commander he can discipline a sol-

ier because of an infraction which he discerned as United Nations, because it's a multinational command, not just a U.S. unified command. And it's only possible because that sort of multiple-hatting is unique there.

Student: That's true, sir, but I think there's another factor too, and it's the same structure as that of the JCS. Hypothetically, Sennewald has a three-star Air Force general directly under him who is a Chief of Staff and one or more deputy commanders of U.S. Forces Korea. But, when something happens with another service — let me pick on the Air Force — he'll go right to that Chief of Staff who's head of the discipline in that particular organization, even though he would be his deputy, and say, "We'd like you to look into it; come up with what should be done." The control of the working relationship between them — regardless of the hats there — works extremely well. He is using the service administration to get it done.

Oettinger: Yes, but you see, in Korea that is somewhat less so because most of the Air Force over there are based in Tokyo. The guys aren't going to be committing infractions in Korea. Since it's mostly an Army presence on the peninsula itself, he has total control — wearing his multiple hats — over the Army components, while the other services are somewhat less present. This is a problem that would rear itself under other circumstances.

Huntington: Yes, but it seems to me that what your point underlines is that in any unified command situation, first there is the question of whether only one service is present, which would be the case of the unified commander in Korea doing business with the Army. Then there's a question of whether it is the Army dealing with the Air Force, and that becomes an entirely different ball game if a unified Army commander is dealing with the Navy and Marines. They are from two different worlds.

Student: I wonder if you could address this question of how your proposal for having three mission czars would work in practice, particularly when you're talking about budget time. Because how it would work in practice, it seems to me, would distinguish whether this would be a moderate proposal or a revolutionary proposal. There would be incentives for the services to make proposals paid by mission lines. Where does the initiative come from? Who does all the work at the lower levels on the budget proposals? Do the under secretaries have just a handful of staff to analyze these proposals, or is there a more elaborate system?

Huntington: Well, I won't say it would be "the best of all possible worlds," since Tony has warned us about that. I'll say my proposal fosters a slightly better, livable world. I think these mission under secretaries should have a sizable staff to do the work and make recommendations to the Secretary of Defense, and to deal with the services' proposals. And they must be able to do a lot more than simply sign off on what the services come up with. I think this means they must have a decent and very competent staff.

Student: Sort of like mini PA&Es (program analysis and evaluation)?

Huntington: Yes. In effect, this would involve breaking up PA&E among other things, and parcelling the work out among the three segments.

Student: What's your view of the transaction costs involved in making this kind of change? And what does that say about how the change should be phased? Should it be done all at once, both at the under secretary level and at the service level, or should it be done gradually?

Huntington: Well, I think that's a hypothetical question, because such a change could only be done gradually and incrementally. It's required for focusing on this particular aspect of what I was discussing and recommending in the article. It seems to me that this would have to go very slowly. And if I could, I will pick up here and continue on a related point that is a good example of how gradual the change has to be.

I'm involved with a task force on defense organization chaired by Philip A. Odeen (former Department of Defense Analyst and NSC Advisor). Also participating are General Andrew J. Goodpaster (former SACEUR), and Melvin R. Laird (Former Secretary of Defense) who are vice-chairmen, and a number of congressmen and senators including Congressmen Aspin and Stratton and Senators Cohen and Nunn, along with a variety of other people — David Jones, "Shy" Meyer, and others. We have come up with a report that we are about to issue on defense organization.*

* *Toward a More Effective Defense: The Final Report of the CSIS Defense Organization Project*, Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, February 1985.

This report makes a wide range of recommendations on various aspects of defense organization. I was urging the virtues of a mission-oriented approach; one which, say, is very popular with Sam Nunn and a number of other people on the Hill. But because we got into a lengthy discussion, my three under secretaries have become three assistant secretaries reporting to the Under Secretary for Policy. The general proposition, or series of propositions, that I advanced have been endorsed. In fact, they just incorporated a lot of my article's language into the report.

They say a lot of other offices in the Secretary of Defense's establishment should be reassigned and put under the assistant secretaries, and that PA&E should move over there. They leave a little bit vague what exactly these three assistant secretaries would do.

I think it's fine, and, if Congress, in a fit of wisdom, decided to approve and pass legislation along these lines, that'd be great. The important thing, at least to my way of thinking, will be to get three offices like this established in the Secretary of Defense's office, even if initially they have relatively little power. Inevitably, in terms of need and the way political dynamics work, they will gradually grow in power. They will take on more and more functions because they will provide a necessary counterbalance to the services for the Secretary of Defense. It's in that type of process over time that we finally will reach this better world.

Student: What if these three under secretaries or assistant secretaries don't grow in power all at the same rate or at the same time?

Huntington: Well, it would be hard for them not to, because they'd be somewhat wedded to each other.

Oettinger: Well, try to look at these things in terms of balances among a number of factors. It closes the loop back to Sam's opening comment about Iklé and having the right people to work in any organizational setting, and to the comment he referenced stating that all that can be done with legislation is opening the doors. While a McNamara would rush through, some other folks would not.

A lawyer would state that this kind of structural change alters the presumptions. And, you know, someone who has some presumptions in his favor and is smart enough to use them will make out better than someone who has presumptions against him. But that does not mean that because the presumptions have been shifted things will happen without a gifted individual at the helm. Usually one or two of the three are weaker and more stupid than the third, so in spite of having some presumptions on their side, they'll get rolled over.

So these "people ideas" that are exaggerated by Iklé, and the "institutional ideas" that simply get exaggerated by folks who are for organization, again work hand in hand, and one can't look at either factor as dominant. What I think we're talking about here is a shift in presumptions — closing some doors and opening others, and the outcome will depend, then, on whether the organization is made of fools, bright people, strong people, or whatever.

Huntington: I will follow up here with a footnote regarding this. During the Carter Administration, Robert Komer (former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy) in effect functioned as an advisor to the Secretary of Defense on NATO affairs. But he really functioned like an Under Secretary for NATO and knocked heads together, put together a long-term defense program, and got the Intermediate Nuclear Force started.

Oettinger: A strong leader can function in the face of very limited presumptions.

Huntington: And when he left, of course, nobody else filled the position and its functions atrophied.

Student: It seems, though, that if things don't go in some kind of structured way, the original problem you're trying to solve — the services problem — ends up as a whole bunch of new problems having to do with the services retaining some kind of power, or the new organizations retaining another kind of power. Where one set of problems existed before, now exist two or three big sets of problems.

Huntington: Well, that is not necessarily the case. If these offices are established, and I think they will be at some point in the next few years, they will experience a gradual accretion of power in the natural course of events. I think this relates to another point which may be relevant here. That is, as I indicated in my article, that I'm in favor of strengthening the Chairman of the JCS, and our task force will come out with most of the standard recommendations to strengthen the position: giving him a deputy, giving him control over the Joint Staff, and giving him some role in the promotion of the Joint Staff.

There are some people who would go further and say that the Chairman really ought to prepare the military program of the government, and that he should submit each year to the President and the Secretary of Defense a fiscally constrained military program, which in effect would be the defense program. I don't feel strongly one way or another on that; I think that would probably be a useful thing for him to do. But I'm very sure that no Secretary of Defense is going to want to allow himself to be in the position where he has the Chairman's recommendation and nothing else. He is going to want to come up with his own, and he inevitably will turn to mission under secretaries or personnel like that, to work as his staff and provide him with advice. Given the importance of civilian control in our system, it is very, very important that he have that sort capability.

Student: Is this the same thing of which we've seen a little bit in the press, dealing with strategic and international issues?

Huntington: Yes, it is.

Student: And can you mention what your recommendation states concerning the service secretaries, or what it will state?

Huntington: My recollection is that the service secretaries are hardly ever mentioned in the report. I have the summary of recommendations here. It makes the Chairman the principal military advisor. It has the JCS to advise the Chairman, but they can also file dissent from any advice that he gives the President or Secretary if they wish. It allows the Chairman to call the Joint Staff. It strengthens the control of the CINCs over the composition and training of their forces. It gives the Chairman a four-star deputy. And it gives the Chairman a significant role in the subsequent promotions of the Joint Staff officers. One proposal in this report — and I must confess, I am not quite sure how it works — would give the CINCs a role in the budgetary process. They would have an operations budget in which they would play a role formulating and administering.

We then get into questions of weapons acquisition, and plenty of other things, but in the additional series of recommendations covering the general areas of planning and resource allocation, we stress the desirability of at least having assistant secretaries of mission dealing with the programming, planning and budgeting process, and saying that the programming and budgeting should be merged. Perhaps more significant to this area of resource allocation, is that there ought to be a biennial defense budget, and a Congressional vote on this once every two years.

I think it's interesting that, while this particular group started out focusing very, very heavily on just the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as we discussed the issues, we began to see we couldn't deal just with the JCS, but we had to deal with a chairman. We also had to address the whole question of the CINCs, and the question of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and eventually had to tackle the question of the way Congress views this. Everybody, including the Congressional people involved, agreed with this. So what I think we have had here is a series of not inconsequential, but moderate, recommendations. Not radical; there's nothing terribly radical here, but moderate recommendations that go across the board: JCS, OSD, CINCs, Congress, and so forth.

I'm not unrealistic enough to think that this is necessarily going to fly through Congress this session. It won't, because I don't think the administration will express any interest — except perhaps along the margins — in supporting these recommendations.

This report will be endorsed, I believe, by the last seven Secretaries of Defense. I think this will keep the issue on the agenda, and will compel Congress to give some attention to this issue, along with other things including the responses to the questionnaire that was sent to the Department of Defense. And I'm reasonably well convinced that either in the next Congress, if the Democrats take control of the Senate, or certainly after 1988, if a Democratic administration were elected, major changes will be forthcoming.

There are certain places whence opposition to reorganization and centralization of authority has come. In the past it generally came from three sources: first, from liberal groups and leaders who were afraid of a Prussian general staff and militarism; second, from Congressional groups who saw greater concentration of power in the executive branch as limiting their ability to gain entree into it and to influence what was going on (Congress always wants to decentralize the executive); third, from the Navy and the Marine Corps.

The striking thing about the situation now, it seems to me, is that the opposition to reorganization and

greater centralization from the first two opponents that I mentioned — from the liberals and from Congress — has greatly weakened. Basically, the people in Congress and, you know, the more liberal groups and newspapers, are supporting the same reforms we are recommending in this task force. And so now the only really strong opposition comes from the Navy and Marine Corps, the traditional centers of opposition. Maybe there'll be new centers emerging.

Student: Well, I was just wondering, how do you think Congress will react to the suggestion of going to a two-year defense budget program?

Huntington: With great indifference, probably. But you get into the problem of whether we should recommend a two-year budget for the entire U.S. government or just for the Department of Defense. It's hard to do one without the other, and yet we have no particular competence to argue that the government should change its entire budgetary procedures.

I have been arguing strenuously that what we ought to say is, "Look, we can make a persuasive case that, in terms of the defense establishment and the defense budget, this is a ridiculous business." Every two years, the same process is repeated: resolutions, authorizations for current items, followed by appropriation acts. This process leads to everything being up for grabs. It's all stop and go. A military force cannot be planned and structured in this manner. One can make a very persuasive argument for a two-year defense budget, and we ought to do that, and there's no reason we can't do that in defense or in the rest of the government. And, indeed, if you want to do it in the rest of the government, you can do it there, too. This would be a reasonable approach for Congress to take. They might say, "Well, let's experiment with a two-year budget in the Defense Department. If it works well there, we can try it elsewhere."

After all, the Department of Defense really experimented with the PPBS (Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System) thing in the 1960s, and then that was picked up and adopted by other branches — other executive departments. Practically speaking, I think it will be a long time before Congress provides a two-year budget even for the Department of Defense, although some of the congressmen and senators involved in this task force are quite strong supporters of it.

McLaughlin: Sam, let me ask you a question, if I may. You mentioned in your article, "the war that no one wants to fight." And I don't know if in your more recent deliberation you have been able to address that more.

Huntington: What did I mean when I said the war no one wants to fight?

McLaughlin: That is the Latin America war of liberation, or another Vietnam — pieces of unconventional fighting — the war that we are most likely to have to fight one of these days, somewhere in the world. None of the services wants the responsibility of war, however. And, I know you mentioned briefly that there are some other people, under the rubric of small wars and whatever, who have been asking questions about that as well. Has the Center for Strategic and International Studies group addressed it at all?

Huntington: No, not specifically. We had discussions, of course, about the problem of the so-called orphan functions and things that nobody wants to do — that sort of thing. And, I suppose Vietnam was mentioned in passing as an example of the small war, low intensity conflict kind of event.

Oettinger: We mentioned earlier when one looks at the government, and particularly at military intelligence, one hears reports in greater depth, paradoxically, by comparing them with reports resulting from the civilian industrial or business arenas. On some of these organizational matters, looking at the business literature may shed a good deal more light simply because reorganizations occur more frequently and more profoundly there. The questions of what really happens, how effective the change is, and what the reorganization looks like years later is more easily discernible from some of the civilian business literature than it is from the governmental literature. It is one of the few instances where looking at both sides of our business and government can be helpful.

Huntington: I think that's a very good point. I came to the idea for mission under secretaries simply by thinking about what our major purposes were and who was responsible for them, and not being able to see that there was anybody responsible for each major purpose, and only for that purpose. Somebody else in Washington came to the identical conclusion from the study of business organizations. He also got involved in briefing Sam Nunn and other people. I think that between the two of us we can make con-

vincing arguments. In business, he says this is the way to organize to have purposeful, mission-oriented divisions, etc. He says, "Look, you've got to have your strategic purposes reflected here."

Oettinger: Overall, I think the lessons from business history teach us that these organizations are unstable arrangements because whether you're organized by product line, specialty, geography, or whatever else, somebody's always going to be unhappy. As the weights shift, the front office will have to say, "We are no longer committed to making brushes, and it's time that we got the handle people and the straw people thinking again about what can we make with long wooden sticks and bits of straw because that's our forte." Or else one says, "Ah, okay, we give up the broom business. We're now in the long-handle and straw business." And then somebody else says, "How can you be so stupid? Because really, you know, the functional problem is cleaning, and you would have overlooked vacuum cleaners if you were organized by sticks and straw."

So one must keep an eye on the dynamics because they keep shifting, and one of the problems with being in the recommending and task force business is that one has to focus on a short term thing if something is to get done. Step back and keep in mind that after this task force, or the next task force, or the following legislative session, there will be another. And, as Sam said when he began this whole presentation, this problem's been around for 40 years and a long time before that, and it will be around for many more years. The point in this is to try to keep an eye on the dynamics, not on the concreteness of particular instances and particular periods, so the dynamics of the system don't become clouded in a lot of fog. Keep an eye on the dynamics.

McLaughlin: Let me just mention as a footnote, too, this tension between organizational models. One only has to remember that in the last decade an awful lot of major corporations created disasters for themselves under various schemes labeled "matrix management" where they tried to breed the two variants together, product-oriented and function-oriented. And I think if there is a lesson to be learned, note that some small places do matrix management without thinking about it, while large ones don't seem to be able to do it at all, and therefore go from one extreme to the other. In doing so, it's not just accidental. They get the advantages of one form of organization for awhile, while the disadvantages become clear. As new sets of problems come up, they switch.

Oettinger: Whereas the matrix system turned out to be painful all the time. Most of the personnel didn't know to whom they reported, where the bread was buttered, and it was perennial chaos without the advantages of either one of the extremes.

Student: Isn't the current service structure today a matrix situation?

Huntington: Well, in a sense it is that, and I'm sure President Eisenhower thought of it in that connection. The services are supposed to develop, train, and provide the forces, and if they operate on the horizontal, then the unified and specified commands operate on the vertical. And that's precisely the reason why situations like Beirut occur, where it's not clear who did what in connection with what happened.

Student: Well, it seemed that the task force report, as you mentioned, made rather minor recommendations. Are those the only things that can be done in the short term?

Huntington: Yes. And, you know, a good part of what we are recommending won't be done. Change, particularly in our system of government, occurs very, very slowly.

David Jones told a story that illustrates that. He used to sit with his British counterpart, Admiral Sir Terence Lewin, their Chief of Defence Staff, at NATO meetings and elsewhere, and they would compare notes. This was back in 1981. They would discuss how they wanted to change their defense or military structures, and Jones and Lewin had the same ideas about strengthening their central defense organization in order to get control over the services and have a more rational and effective planning system. And David Jones said Lewin went back, wrote up his plan in a memorandum and sent it to the Prime Minister. He got it back two weeks later with "Approved, Margaret Thatcher," written on it. It was implemented immediately.

And David Jones said, "I went back, wrote an article and published it three years ago, and today it is still being debated."