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GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ALMOST GOT IT RIGHT
A Fifth Star For The Chairman

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirement of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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This thesis recommends an amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (GNA) to confer operational and administrative command authority on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), designate his position as the Commander of the Armed Forces, and assign the grade of five stars to the new position. Since 1947, a continuing objective of the presidency and Congress has been to improve military effectiveness and efficiencies through a simplified chain of command and a more unified armed force. The GNA enhanced the CJCS's role and functions as a means to achieve these objectives, however it did not confer any additional authority on the CJCS. A review of military and organizational theory provides substantive rationale which supports the proposed amendment. Additionally, an assessment of the CJCS's role and functions in relationship to his existing authority indicates increasing his authority would enhance unification efforts and improve the military chain of command. The effect of the amendment would be a more effective and efficient united armed force capable of responding to changes in global and domestic threats and priorities and supported by a more effective chain of command.

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GOLDWATER-NICHOLS ALMOST GOT IT RIGHT
A FIFTH STAR FOR THE CHAIRMAN

Introduction

The impact of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (GNA) and subsequent changes in global and domestic threats and priorities have produced a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) whose increasingly dominant role in military affairs requires a commensurate increase in his authority. Specifically, the Chairman requires operational command authority over the Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) of the combatant commands and administrative command authority over the armed forces and the services. The GNA revised the CJCS's role and functions however, it did not confer any command authority on the Chairman. It prohibits his exercise of military command over the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) or any armed forces and limits the Chairman to the grade of general or admiral (four-stars).[1] Since 1986, continuing security changes and concurrent domestic pressures to reduce the cost of defense have validated the GNA's emphasis on unification. The increased authority proposed is required to enable the CJCS to accelerate unification of the services and create a single chain of command, both intended products of the GNA.[2] The effect of this proposal would be a more effective and efficient organization capable of change and a single, operational and administrative, military chain of command.

The methodology I will use to support my proposal consists of four parts. First, I will examine the historical derivations of the Chairman's authority. Secondly, I will address the issue of authority based on military and organizational theory. In the third section I will analyze the Chairman's current authority versus his assigned role and functions and assess

the effectiveness of this relationship. I will conclude with a recommendation which will empower the Chairman to more effectively and efficiently respond to an ever changing global and domestic environment.

Historical Review

Since 1947 Congress and the presidency have sought solutions to the civil-military issue of a unified armed force. The type of unification intended was "centralized direction...and concomitant subordination of the military departments and services to a centralized control structure."[3] A central theme in this debate concerned the amount of authority Congress was willing to relinguish and the amount the presidency prefered to delegate to senior military officials. In the late 40's and early 50's President Truman proposed a single military officer to represent the military and the JCS.[4] Congress was generally reluctant to accept this concept and the National Security Act of 1947 made no provisions for a single advisor or a CJCS. By 1949 Congress had accepted the need for a CJCS. They passed the 1949 Amendments to the National Security Act of 1947 which created the position of a Chairman. However, they prohibited him from having command authority and inserted language in the Amendment stating "...not to establish a single Chief of Staff over the armed forces."[5] By the mid 50's President Eisenhower was convinced of the need to "place greater responsibility on the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff."[6] Searching for increased military efficiencies and effectiveness Congress and the President agreed to the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958. This act strengthened the Chairman's authority over the JCS, but Congress again withheld command authority from the Chairman. The JCS, after 1947, were unanimous in their opinions concerning the CJCS. They would

concede only the establishment of a Chairman whose authority did not threaten the autonomy of the JCS or the individual services.[7]

1958 through 1986 witnessed periodic episodes of less than acceptable performance by the armed forces. Vietnam, the Iran hostage rescue attempt, the Beirut disaster, and Grenada generated demands for military reform.[8] By 1986 President Reagan, Congress, and the CJCS were unanimous in support of strengthening the office of the Chairman. The legislative intent was to grant the Chairman some additional authority to facilitate further unification of the armed forces while protecting civilian discretionary authority over defense matters.[9] The result was the GNA. Prior to the Act five people worked for the Chairman performing fourteen functions. After the GNA the Chairman had sixty five distinct functions and 1,627 personnel working for him.[10]

Today, it can be debated, the Chairman is the most powerful officer in the military. His influence spans the entire spectrum of national security, civil-military relations, and military affairs. However, he retains the same grade and command authority the first Chairman, General Bradley, possessed in 1949. Faced with a changing world and an increasing disparity between the Chairman's responsibility and authority two questions are posed. First, should the Chairman be assigned operational command authority to enhance operational effectiveness? Second, does the Chairman possess the requisite administrative command authority to efficiently adapt the armed forces to change? A review of military and organizational theory offers some answers to these questions.

Military Theory

There are three common arguments for not conferring operational command authority on the CJCS. The first suggests it is unwise to empower military officers removed from the battle with such authority. This theory considers the factors of time and space as formidable barriers for effective execution of military operations directed from afar. Sun Tzu and Clausewitz argued the issue of time and space with the assumption that the commander would be in the field. Sun Tzu states that "To say that a general must await commands of the sovereign...is like informing a superior that you wish to put out a fire. Before the order to do so arrives the ashes are cold."[11] Clausewitz argued that direction from the state is "...only feasible if...the government ---is near the theater of operations, so that decisions can be taken without serious loss of time."[12] The theoreticians' arguments are analogous to historical concerns of a senior officer commanding forces in combat and being concurrently far removed from the operational arena. However, today's technology has mitigated the issues of time and space as a valid reason for withholding such authority from the CJCS.

The second argument warns that a Chairman with operational command authority would introduce an unnecessary cog in the chain of command. The GNA redefined the chain of command and established a direct line between the National Command Authorities (NCA) and the CINCs and excludes the CJCS. The purpose was to strengthen civilian control over military operations and simplify the chain of command. While in principle this arrangement is logical, in practice the Chairman has been introduced as an increasingly important facilitator in chain of command functions. The President, as authorized in the GNA, has directed that communications to and from the CINCs go through the CJCS. Similarly, the

GNA authorized, and the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) has assigned the Chairman as the spokesperson for the CINCs on matters of operational requirements.[13] The actions of the President and the SECDEF indicate their preference for a Chairman active in the chain of command. There is no evidence that his participation has threatened civilian control or complicated the chain of command. Conferring operational authority on the Chairman would not introduce additional impediments to chain of command functions which do not already exist. On the contrary, conference of authority assumes a commensurate amount of responsibility and accountability which should increase the Chairman's credibility and result in an improved chain of command.

A final argument concerns the potential weakening of civilian control if too much power is vested in a single military officer. The issue has its roots in American democratic principles and proponents use the examples of the Prussian and German armies to support their claims. Admiral Crowe's letter of 04 February 1986, as CJCS, to Congressional members addressed this subject. "He stated his belief that civilian control of the military was an established practice and not subject to any reasonable doubt."[14] Admiral Crowe's statement has been repeatedly validated throughout American history. The most recent was the removal of General Woerner by President Bush during the 1990 military operations in Panama. The additional powers delegated by Congress to the Chairman, in the GNA, were in part Congressional recognition that past concerns of civilian authority were adequately protected. The character of American government, with its balances of power, is recognized as sufficient to prevent the emergence of a military person who could influence the nature of the military in directions other than determined appropriated by civilian authority.

The challenge of balancing the delicate nature of civil authority and military operational command and executing the nation's political will through a military chain of command are formidable tasks. The three previous arguments are all elements of this balancing dilemma. Clausewitz offers a solution.

> If war is to be fully consonant with political objectives, and policy suited to the means of war, then unless the statesman and soldier are combined in one person, the only sound expedient is to make the commander-in-chief a member of cabinet, so that the cabinet can share in the major aspects of his activities....That is what the Austrian Emperor did in 1809, and the allied sovereigns in 1813.... The practice justified itself perfectly.[15]

The GNA almost got it right. It designated the Chairman as the principal military advisor to the NCA and authorized his participation in the cabinet level National Security Council (NSC). It appears Clausewitz, given the foresight of modern day technology and the American political system, may have recommended assigning the Chairman operational command authority as the best arrangement for resolving this civil-military issue.

Organizational Theory

General Shalikashili, CJCS, addresses the issue of joint doctrine and states,

> The nature of modern warfare demands we fight as a team....**joint warfare is team warfare**...now the truly hard part begins - putting this doctrine to use throughout our Armed Forces. So I ask that you... reflect upon what it says about **attitude**....To that end, all commanders must understand, teach, and apply joint doctrine...to fight our Nation's wars. Accordingly, please ensure...and promote...at every opportunity.[16]

The Chairman's words suggest an attempt to improve the efficiency of the armed forces by adopting doctrine and implementing the changes necessary to be successful in future wars. His statement is not directive. He invokes a voluntary challenge to the military to embed

joint doctrine, institutionalize changes, and prioritize resource decisions which will enhance joint warfare. The implication is that military organizations will unilaterally put aside parochial concerns for the good of the unified team. Organizational theory indicates this approach to change will not be successful. The nature of the organization and adequacy of authority are major issues when contemplating the type of change envisioned by the CJCS.

Mariann Jelinek stresses the importance of understanding the critical process of change in the organization. She believes it is imperative for leaders, in an era of constant technological and social change, to be able to develop programs and effectively break paradigms if they hope to institutionalize change within their organizations.[17] Kotter and Pennings offer contributing descriptions of the type of organization the military is and the special challenges they present to a Chairman attempting to implement change. Kotter reports a major feature in today's organization is interdependence and explains the special leadership challenges this lack of autonomy in subordinate units creates when attempting to change.[18] Pennings in, *Organizational Strategy and Change*, argues that many large organizations when asked to change may appear to initially embrace the new concept. However, as time progresses he predicts the members will proceed to weaken the effects of the change and gradually return the organization to a previous status quo.[19] Robert House contends the organization's aversion to change and preference for the status quo is a function of power. He explains that those who possess institutional power will use their considerable resources to protect and maintain their power base.[20] For these "power brokers" change is often considered a threat if it challenges the fundamental principles from which they derive their powers.

In perspective, what these authors argue is that members of an organization may, in sum or unilaterally, view change as a threat to their power and take action to derail or weaken the impact change might have on their specific areas of interests. If we accept the authors' arguments, the Chairman's appeal for voluntary change may be an exercise in futility. Rosabeth Kanter in, *The Change Master*, agrees with this assessment. She explains that for any corporation to succeed it members must be anxious for change and leaders of change must be able to acquire and use their power to produce change. However, she argues, the dominant factor in the relationship is power.

> Any new strategy, no matter how brilliant or responsive, no matter how much agreement the formulators have about it, will stand a good chance of not being implemented fully---or sometimes not at all---without someone with power pushing it.[21]

Power is the ability to do or act. Authority is the power to judge, act, or command.[22] The Chairman does not possess the power of administrative command authority to effectively institutionalize change. Without this authority he must rely on positional authority and influence to implement changes which may threaten subordinate power bases. The effect of increasing the Chairman's administrative authority would be to enhance his ability to achieve improved total force efficiencies.

Organizational theory suggests that authority, the organization, and change are necessarily interdependent. In the next section I will analyze the Chairman's current authority versus his assigned organizational role, functions, and goals and assess the effectiveness of this relationship.

Assessing the Chairman's Effectiveness

The GNA legislated a specific role and three primary functions for the CJCS. The Chairman's role is to serve as a communication conduit to the CINCs and provide oversight of the CINCs, as directed by the President and the SECDEF, respectively.[23] The Chairman's functions include: (1) principal military advisor to the President, the SECDEF, and the NSC, (2) planning, (3) advice, (4) policy formulation, and (5) report on the assignment of roles and missions.[24]

A General Accounting Office report of March 1989 determined that 28 of the identified 33 actions required to implement the Chairman's new responsibilities had been completed.[25] Lovelace concluded in August 1996 that "The DOD has substantially, but not completely, implemented the Goldwaters-Nichols Act."[26] For the purpose of this assessment I intend to examine those portions of the GNA where the authority of the Chairman is a dominant issue.

The Chairman's Role. The role of the Chairman, as stated earlier, is to provide a communication conduit for, and oversight of the combatant commanders. In the short term this relationship appears feasible and effective. A false assumption would be to conclude that these relationships and duties will remain constant. The President and the SECDEF are not legally bound to use the CJCS, to assist them in executing their command function.

A significant portion of the GNA was dedicated to expanding the authority and responsibility of the CINCs. The purpose was to enhance the CINCs ability to prepare for and conduct military operations. However, "The real authority exercised by the CINCs is determined, largely, by the extent to which the CJCS acts as their spokesperson."[27] Given

this dependency, the CINCs' effectiveness appears vulnerable to the fiduciary relationship between the Chairman, the President, and the SECDEF. Dependent on how they define the Chairman's duties will in a large part determine how effective a role he is able to undertake for the CINCs.

The Chairman's role can become more effective. Codification of the CJCS's operational command authority would eliminate the potential transitory nature of his role and inculcate accountability at the CJCS level. The effect would be a more stable and consistent role which would be self-sustaining during transitions between new administrations and Chairmen.

Principal Military Advisor. The GNA provided the CJCS with the authority to act as the principal advisor to the President, the SECDEF, and the NSC. Two military operations indicate he has been effective performing this function. During Operation Just Cause, it was noted that,

> ...President Bush and the enhanced authority of the Chairman... combined to provide...effective command and control...General Powell acted to ensure the political success of the operation.[28]

The success in the Persian Gulf War was credited in large measures to the superb advise provided to the NCA by the Chairman. The Secretary of Defense noted, "General Powell's strategic insight and exceptional leadership helped the American people...ensure our forces fought smart."[29]

Planning. The three subordinate categories of this function include strategic direction, strategic planning, and contingency planning. In all three areas the Chairman has been effective. The inefficiencies which exist are not due to inadequacy of authority, but a

by-product of dependence on guidance from the NSC and the NCA. The Chairman has provided strategic direction, through his National Military Strategy. Additionally, he has authored a long term vision for the armed forces in, *Joint Vision 2010*. Concerning strategic planning, Lovelace considers the CJCS' present plans to be inadequate.[30] He cites the lack of a global strategic plan as evidence. However, such a plan must be based on a National Security Strategy (NSS) which provides sufficient detail to develop a global strategic plan. A detailed NSS does not exist and it is not within the Chairman's authority to correct. Contingency planning has been effective. The plans for the Panama operations and those used against Iraq were based on contingency plans directed by the Chairman. In Panama, plans were being drafted in 1988 for operations conducted in 1990.[31] "USCINCCENT began planning for the defense of the Arabian Peninsula in 1989."[32]

Advice on Requirements, Programs, and Budget. The Chairman has been marginally effective in the area of requirements. The GNA's intent was to use the Chairman, as the CINCs' spokesperson, to ensure the warfighter's requirements are fully addressed. The Chairman uses the CINCs' Integrated Priority List and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) to facilitate the process. However, he uses JROC recommendations to develop the Chairman's Program Recommendation and the Chairman's Program Assessment. These programs are used to influence program guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense. The services are better represented on the JROC and thus have more influence than the CINCs over military requirements.[33] Additionally, the services may operate through their individual Secretaries to influence Congressional acquisition decisions. The most notable example of this was the Marine Corps' ability to sustain support for the V-22. One

final area which influences CINC requirements is the Unified Command Plan (UCP). The Chairman reviews the CINCs' missions, needs, boundaries, and force structure and makes recommendations to the NCA for necessary corrections to the UCP. In this functional area the Chairman has been effective.[34]

The GNA intended to provide separate budgetary authority to the CINCs. DOD decided not to establish this authority.[35] This decision endorsed the existing system within which the Chairman has no budget authority. Two General Accounting Office (GAO) reports highlight problems with the Department of Defense's (DOD) budgetary system. In June 1996, GAO reported to Congress asserting that "DOD's financial systems cannot reliably determine costs....are classified high risk...are not integrated...and cannot easily capture actual incremental costs."[36] The results of the report indicate inefficiencies may exist between operational demands on the budget and the administrative control of the budget. I would argue that granting operational and administrative authority, as proposed, to the Chairman would create a more centralized and focused military approach to correcting budgetary inefficiencies.

Joint Doctrine, Training, and Education. GNA assigned the authority and provided the means for the Chairman to be partially effective in these functional areas. Joint doctrine at the Joint Staff and CINC level is well established. It is through this doctrine that the Chairman is best able to introduce policy for conducting joint warfare. The growing size in number of joint publications and the Joint Warfare Center attest to the Chairman's capabilities when given the proper authority. The universal application of joint doctrine however, has not been completed. The Chairman's authority only extends to joint forces and

joint warfare, he can only request that the services inculcate this doctrine in their own areas. An example is the Navy's continued use of the Combined Warfare Commander's organization which is not compatible with the Chairman's Joint Task Force organization. Additionally, obvious ambiguity exists in warfighting terminology among the various military organizations.

The Chairman requires Congressional support to enforce joint education and training requirements on the services. Congressional guidelines mandate the number of joint billets required to be filled by officers who have received specific training. The Chairman relies on the voluntary support of the services to promote this program. However, for the combined period of 1991 through 1995 none of the services met their full joint officer promotion expectations for the grades of O-6 through O-8.[37] Organizational theory predicts, in the absence of Congressional guidelines and the requisite authority vested in the Chairman, the services may migrate away from supporting joint education and training requirements. The primary limitation concerning operational joint training of the forces is the control the services exercise over the budget. The CJCS and the CINCs rely primarily on the services for training support. While joint operations and training opportunities appear adequate at the CINC level, little evidence exists that preparatory joint training is mandatory or planned at the service level.

Report on the Assignment of Roles and Missions. Congress directed the Chairman to conduct periodic reviews and make recommendations concerning the functions, roles, and missions of the armed forces. Chairmen, deficient in authority, have not submitted any significant recommendations to Congress in the past eleven years. General Shalikashvili

noted, "...such a task may be too difficult for DOD."[38] The Chairman has not been effective in this functional area.

To summarize, the Chairman's effectiveness is significantly enhanced in those areas where he has the requisite authority for the assigned task. A broader perspective indicates the Chairman's inability to effectively implement change. After eleven years, no significant changes have occurred in service roles or missions, services continue to dominate the requirements process, there is not a single military chain of command, and the 1986 accelerated unification effort has become a twenty-five year vision.

Recommendation

There is evidence to conclude conferring administrative and operational command authority on the CJCS could improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the military. Clausewitz reminds us that, "War is no pastime....It is a serious means to a serious end..."[39] This statement should be sufficient to ensure the best ideas, concepts, and programs are institutionalized prior to the next armed conflict. However, the fact that the Nation's most powerful and senior military officer lacks the requisite authority to facilitate necessary changes indicates Clausewitz's warning has not been fully embraced. An amendment to the GNA is required to correct these deficiencies.

I recommend the GNA be amended to confer operational and administrative command authority on the CJCS. The authority would include command over all the armed forces. I further recommend the Chairman's title be changed to Commander of the Armed Forces and commensurate with the title and authority he be assigned the grade of five stars.

To support this recommendation the following arguments are made. Politically, the time is optimum for the proposed amendment. History indicates a continuing desire by the presidency and Congress for increased unification of the armed forces. The GNA is the most recent example of Congressional recognition that vesting substantial power and authority in a single military officer does not threaten their discretionary powers. Strategically, the relative low threat environment would suggest no better time to make the proposed changes.

Militarily, the force drawdown and reduced defense appropriations have required the services to seek synergistic solutions to their resource constraints. However, the past eleven years also indicate the services, while potentially willing, are not capable of unilaterally making the necessary changes. The changes demand a military leader with the power and authority to overcome organizational resistance to change.

A significant effect of this recommendation would be the creation of a single military chain of command running from the Commander to both the operational and administrative commands and services. The military functions best when leadership, responsibility, and accountability begin at the top of a pyramid. Today's forces operate under an umbrella of competing loyalties. Promoting the Chairman to five stars, distinguishing him as the authoritative leader accountable for all military actions, would foster unity of effort and accelerate unification more than any other single act.

Military and organizational theory indicate the positive results such an amendment could produce. The speed of change and the dramatic breakthroughs in technology have produced a significantly compressed world in terms of time and space. The strategic advantages and challenges this new era offers must be capitalized on if the military is to

remain competitive. The military must possess the flexibility and determination to make the necessary changes that are in the best interest of the joint fighting force. Fiscal reality, the incremental costs of modern weapon systems, and the nature of modern warfare no longer accommodates a single service solution. President Eisenhower statement to Congress in April 1958 articulated this concept,

> Confronted by such urgent needs we cannot allow differing service viewpoints to determine the character of our defenses....I cannot overemphasize my conviction that our country's security requirements must not be subordinated to outmoded or single-service concepts of war.[40]

In conclusion, the new position of Commander of the Armed Forces offers a tremendous enhancement to our nation's security. As the military leader of the armed forces, the Commander will have the requisite authority to ensure America's fighting forces are the most efficient and effective in the world. His promotion to five stars will crystallize the chain of command and foster a degree of unity and professionalism exceeding the expectations of civilian authority and the American public. Finally, the Commander will possess the capability to more effectively adapt the armed forces to the global changes and challenges which may threaten our nation.

NOTES

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