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American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era

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experience, frequently under- or overestimate the difficulty of formulating and implementing strategy in the U.S. government. As a result, observers tend either to portray senior policy makers as dolts or incompetents or to engage in a sort of strategic nihilism holding that it is impossible to develop sound strategy in this day and age.

Daniel Drezner's informative collection *Avoiding Trivia* deserves to be read by scholars of both varieties. It contains essays that were commissioned for a 2008 conference held at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the State Department's policy planning office, an organization best known for its first director, George Kennan, and his successor, Paul H. Nitze. The contributors are largely scholar-practitioners, including several of my own counterparts during my service as deputy assistant secretary of defense during the George W. Bush administration.

The first section of the book includes contributions by Richard Haass, David Gordon and Daniel Twining, and Jeffrey Legro, who discuss the strategic environment and the challenges it poses for policy planning in the United States.

Bruce Jentleson, Aaron Friedberg, and Peter Feaver and William Inboden are found in the second section, discussing how strategic planning can best be implemented in the executive branch. The latter chapter, describing the resurrection of the strategic planning function at the National Security Council during the George W. Bush administration, is particularly insightful.

Essays by Amy Zegart, Thomas Wright, Andrew Erdmann, and Steven Krasner cover the opportunities and limitations for strategic planning in the final section.

This work collectively emphasizes the imperative of strategic planning as well as why it is an art whose practice is difficult. It deserves the attention of scholars and practitioners alike.

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Nielson, Suzanne C., and Don M. Snider, eds. *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009. 409pp. $34.95

Samuel J. Huntington published his seminal work on American civil-military relations, *The Soldier and the State,* in 1957. His analysis, reflective of the U.S. experience in World War II, Korea, and the Cold War, was designed to "maximize military security at the least sacrifice to other social values." It has provided a theoretical and practical guide to civil-military relations for more than fifty years. However, in this "new era" of the first decade of the twenty-first century, many have challenged the continued relevance of Huntington's theories.

In 2007, editors Suzanne Nielson and Don Snider assembled an impressive interdisciplinary group of scholars to analyze Huntington's theories in light of the American experience since 1957. Fifteen researchers produced a dozen essays addressing Huntington's main theoretical contributions: the functional and societal imperatives that shape the nature of the military organization, the subjective and objective patterns of civilian control of the military,

and the development of the military officer corps as a profession. The book serves as a dialogue on those theories and produces often-diverging viewpoints about Huntington's ideas and the condition of the American civil-military relationship.

Regarding Huntington's "The Crisis of American Civil-Military Relations," the book begins with the current state of civil-military relations. Richard D. Betts suggests that while tension may exist between the military and its civilian leadership, it is not unusual, given the realities of our democratic system. This is so because "objective control," although not of a pure form, has kept the military obedient to various administrations. Matthew Moten discusses Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's leadership of the Department of Defense, characterizing it as a period of "broken dialogue" marked by "distrust within the Pentagon and throughout the defense establishment." General Eric Shinseki, retired Army chief of staff, serves as a model for the military response to such strong civilian leadership, providing forceful military advice in private, while publicly supporting political superiors.

The assembled authors agree that military officers should avoid political involvement. When military and civilian leaders disagree on security policy, several authors state, resignation is not an option for the military officer, since it is an inherently political act. Yet James Burk comments that military officers are also morally autonomous and accountable for their actions, not "purely instrumental" agents of the state. Discussing Huntington's assertion that the "military mind" should reflect a conservative outlook in support of American institutions, Darrell Driver cites research suggesting that no such unifying conservative ideology exists. Yet a number of authors comment on the overwhelming Republican Party affiliation of military personnel. Other authors discuss improvement of professional military education, expansion of military missions to include stability operations, "Madi-sonian" approach to national security and civilian control, and the responsibility of military professionals to build trust with civilian leaders of inconsistent military expertise.

In the final chapter, Nielson and Snider advance nine conclusions resulting from their research (however, not all contributors are in agreement). The last is probably the most instructive, that Huntington's work provides "continuing value" to the discussion regarding American civil-military relations. This book is best regarded as a commentary on Huntington's 1957 work, one that also provides a good review of the current scholarship on American civil-military relations theory and experience. However, keep a copy of Huntington nearby as you read it.

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Asmus, Ronald D. *A Little War That Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 272pp. $27

In August 2008, Russia shattered the post–Cold War peace in Europe by invading the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Though only days long, that war dashed NATO's hopes to expand to the Caucasus and sparked fundamental reevaluations of American and European Union (EU) relations with Russia.