



[Home](#) » [Bureaus/Offices Reporting Directly to the Secretary](#) » [Policy Planning Staff](#)

## Policy Planning Staff

---

### **Mission Statement**

#### **Fusing Thought With Action: The Mission and Purpose of the Policy Planning Staff**

Created in 1947 by George Kennan at the request of Secretary of State George C. Marshall, the Policy Planning Staff (S/P) serves as a source of independent policy analysis and advice for the Secretary of State. The Policy Planning Staff's mission is to take a longer term, strategic view of global trends and frame recommendations for the Secretary of State to advance U.S. interests and American values.

In his memoirs *Present at the Creation*, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson characterized the role of Policy Planning: "To anticipate the emerging form of things to come, to reappraise policies which had acquired their own momentum and went on after the reasons for them had ceased, and to stimulate and, when necessary, to devise basic policies crucial to the conduct of our foreign affairs."

For today's Policy Planning Staff, fulfilling this same, core mission for the Secretary requires striking a fine balance between engagement in the day-to-day requirements of diplomacy and development of long term, strategic plans. Broadly speaking, the daily work of the Policy Planning Staff may be divided into six areas:

#### **Analysis**

Policy Planning serves as an internal think tank for the Department of State - undertaking broad analytical studies of regional and functional issues, identifying gaps in policy, and initiating policy planning and formulation to fill these gaps. Policy Planning also serves as an institutionalized "second opinion" on policy matters - providing recommendations and alternative courses of action to the Secretary of State.

#### **Special Projects**

Policy Planning assumes special projects or takes the lead on certain issues as tasked by the Secretary of State. Recent examples include Policy Planning's work on assembling the international coalition against terrorism, coordinating the reconstruction of Afghanistan through February 2002, and implementing the Good Friday agreement in Northern Ireland.

#### **Policy Coordination**

Policy Planning engages functional and regional bureaus within the State Department and relevant government agencies to ensure coordination and integration of policy with longer-term objectives.

#### **Policy Articulation**

The speechwriters for the Secretary of State are members of the Policy Planning Staff and work together with the whole Staff and all bureaus to draft the Secretary's speeches, public remarks, testimony before Congress, and

contributions to print media.

### Liaison

Policy Planning acts as a liaison with nongovernmental organizations, the academic community, think tanks, and others to exchange expert views on matters relevant to U.S. policy and to ensure that broad public opinion informs the policy formulation process.

### Planning Talks

Policy Planning holds a series of dialogues -- known as planning talks -- with counterparts from other countries, including our key European allies, Japan, South Korea, Australia, China, and Russia. These talks provide an opportunity to discuss broad strategic issues that go beyond crisis management or the day-to-day concerns of diplomacy.

### Dissent

The Director of the Policy Planning Staff manages the State Department's Dissent Channel. Consistent with its mandate to stimulate innovation and creativity in the Department, this unique process allows the Policy Planning Director to bring constructive, dissenting or alternative views on substantive foreign policy issues to the Secretary of State and Senior Department Officials.

The Policy Planning Staff is typically a mix of career government officials and outside experts who bring differing perspectives and bases of experience to the conduct of U.S. diplomacy. Recently, the staff has included Foreign Service Officers, academics from universities and think tanks, intelligence analysts, former congressional staffers, an emergency room physician, a retired military officer, a business consultant, an arms control expert, and an economist. The staff is responsible for covering the full range of foreign policy issues facing the United States, although staff members exercise discretion and judgement in identifying the areas they focus on.

Shortly after he left the Policy Planning Staff in 1969, Zbigniew Brzezinski (who went on to become President Carter's National Security Advisor) wrote: "The purpose of planning policy is to fuse thought with action." That imperative guides us today.

[What's New](#)
[FAQ](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Subject Index](#)
[Search](#)

[Email this Page](#)
[About State.gov](#)
[Privacy Notice](#)
[FOIA](#)
[Copyright Information](#)
[White House](#)
[Other U.S. Government Info](#)
[Arch](#)

#### Media Center

[Daily Press Briefings](#)
[Press Releases](#)
[Remarks, Testimony by Senior Officials](#)
[Op-Eds by Department Officials](#)
[Foreign Press Center](#)
[Ask the Department](#)
[Video](#)
[DipNote Blog](#)
[Photo Gallery](#)
[Email Subscriptions](#)
[RSS News Feeds](#)

#### Travel

[Passports](#)
[Visas](#)
[Travel Information](#)
[Emergency Services](#)
[Foreign Per Diem Rates](#)
[More...](#)

#### Careers

[Foreign Service Officer](#)
[Civil Service Officer](#)
[Foreign Service Specialist](#)
[Student Programs](#)

#### Business

[Business Support: Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)
[Global Partnership Initiative](#)
[Commercial and Business Affairs Office](#)
[Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts](#)
[Trade Policy and Programs](#)
[Country Commercial Guides](#)
[Defense Trade Controls](#)
[Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization](#)

#### Secretary Clinton

[Remarks](#)
[Travel](#)
[Photos](#)
[Biography](#)
[More...](#)

#### Youth and Education

[Student Website](#)
[Diplomatic History](#)
[Student Career Program](#)
[Virtual Student Foreign](#)
[Youth Exchange Progra](#)

[More...](#)

[International Organizations](#)

[USAJobs: Working for America](#)

[More...](#)

[Guide To Doing Business](#)

[Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#)

[More...](#)

[Fulbright Program](#)

[Exchange Visitor Programe](#)

[U.S. Diplomacy Center](#)

[More...](#)

The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.