

President's Foreword

What should be the role of the United States and other foreign powers in unstable areas of the world? This question, which is as pertinent as it has ever been, may seem like an issue for presidents, cabinet members, and flag officers—and it is—but it also affects the military and foreign policy establishments all the way down to ground level, where junior officers, enlisted troops, and State Department/USAID personnel are engaging the local populations. Indeed, those of us who have served in a military or civilian capacity among the people in Iraq or Afghanistan will recognize many similarities in the challenges that we faced with those Robert Angevine describes that confronted the U.S. Army in the Philippines a century ago. The author quotes one Constabulary officer who noted that he “had to know not only military work, but he also had to be an executive as well as a tactful politician.”

It is also important to know the local culture, including landmark historical events and how the memory of them continues to have impact. In his article on the Battle of Maiwand, fought by the British in Afghanistan in 1880, Erich Wagner quotes our current commanding officer with Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Lieutenant General Richard P. Mills, as saying that the Afghans regularly reminded him in 2010 of “the Maiwand War” and of how their ancestors had made Afghanistan the “the graveyard of empires.” As Wagner writes, and vividly details in his piece, “the memory of those times is still alive in the community.”

Instability has been the order of the day in Somalia for decades now, but Peter Pham's article offers at least some hope from the northern part of that country, which is known as Somaliland. Pham, who is widely recognized as one of the leading experts on the region and is a senior advisor to U.S. Africa Command, posits that lessons from the Somaliland experience may be applicable in other countries.

The challenges of Somalia, as well as the positives of what is transpiring in Somaliland, should be on the minds of those dealing with the rapidly evolving circumstances in the Middle East and

North Africa in the wake of 2011's "Arab Spring." In our final piece, Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns outlines U.S. policy in that region, which is suddenly in the midst of escalated transition. Perhaps nowhere else is the question with which I began more relevant as we watch what courses the new and old governments and militaries in that area will take. The articles presented in this issue provide excellent grist for discussion of this and other questions, as well as information that should be useful as we prepare for what lies ahead.

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