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Review by Sarah B. Snyder, University College London

At a time when the history of United States foreign relations is increasingly expanding in new directions, Hannah Gurman's work succeeds in returning our attention to diplomats and their work. For all of the significance of nonstate actors, members of Congress, and others, Gurman's book reminds us that diplomats, even more so today in Iraq and Afghanistan, are on the front lines of American engagement with the world.

Among the strengths of this manuscript is Gurman's ability to bring together familiar stories and showcase them in a new light. Gurman examines what she terms "dissent" by George Kennan, China experts John Paton Davies and John Stewart Service, and Undersecretary of State George Ball but doesn't treat her chapters as isolated case studies (9). For example, Kennan, the first diplomat she profiles, returns in a later chapter as a champion of political reporting, defending Service's dispatches from China during the 1940s.

Gurman illuminates how State Department personnel conceived of policymaking and their role in it. To some degree, the persecution of China hands Davies and Service suggests that the 'sausage-making' aspects of policymaking should be shielded from political scrutiny. Gurman might explore this idea in greater depth particularly as it intersects with the recent WikiLeaks releases she highlights in her book. Gurman's work betrays a strong interest in the act of writing, subjecting it to scrutiny as close as the memoranda she analyzes. She offers a particularly interesting analysis of George Ball's penchant for endlessly revising memoranda and his aim to revise U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Her book is probingly analytical in all of the right spots.

Nonetheless, Gurman's complex account prompts further questions. For example, how much did proximity to Foggy Bottom matter? Is the dissent of those based in Washington different from those stationed abroad? Do diplomats have an easier chance of being heard in dispatches sent back from post? Her description of Kennan's relationship with his political patron Undersecretary of the Navy James Forrestal is particularly engaging and begs further analysis of the psychology of the men she profiles. Must these diplomats dissent because they lack the social acuity to draw attention to their views through other means?

Some of these questions might have been addressed by a clearer discussion of terminology at the outset of the book. Gurman does not sufficiently define dissent, which obscures the extent to which we should see Kennan, for example, as dissenting from U.S. policy. Related to this, she suggests that U.S. diplomat John Brady Kiesling, who resigned in opposition in 2003 to the coming war in Iraq, was not opposed to becoming "a public dissident" (193). It isn't clear from her discussion whether the terms dissident and dissenter are interchangeable or if they suggest different proximities to power.

Gurman's study is most interesting when it moves beyond familiar characters such as Kennan, Davies, and Ball to explore the 1971 creation of a "dissent channel" in the State

Department.¹ She effectively discusses congressional interest in Cyprus desk officer Thomas Boyatt's dissent channel memo that argued the United States could have acted to prevent the recent coup in Cyprus. Here she makes broader connections to power struggles between the executive and legislative branches and to greater congressional assertiveness in the wake of Watergate. However, beyond exploring the political manipulation of diplomatic dissent, greater discussion of the consequences of using the dissent channel would have illuminated its purpose. For example, she writes, "The channel proved that dissent could be tolerated so long as it remained inside the bureaucracy. To be sure, several users of the Dissent Channel were fired. And many more received negative evaluations" (189). Was there consideration of developing greater protections for foreign service officers who used the dissent channel given that both the Accra and Cyprus dissenters whom she profiles were re-assigned after sending their memos? Their views might finally reach the top of the chain of the command, but what were the consequences for their careers? Were there examples of personnel using the dissent channel and remaining in their positions? Or did utilizing the channel make continued involvement in that aspect of U.S. policy untenable?

This book would have been stronger if Gurman had undertaken a comprehensive evaluation of the hundreds of messages that foreign service officers sent through the dissent channel after Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's departure. She alludes to several issues, including U.S. policy toward Argentina in 1977, that were raised through the channel but doesn't explore the stories surrounding these messages in any depth. Gurman highlights the twenty foreign service officers who protested the United States invasion of Cambodia in a 1970 letter to Secretary of State William Rogers, which she describes as "the largest act of internal dissent to date in the history of the State Department" (167). Following this analysis with an examination of State Department reporting on the Cambodian genocide in the Carter years would have added to her study. She might also have examined those who protested United States inaction on Bosnia. Open dissent regarding United States policy on Bosnia included an April 1993 letter signed by a dozen diplomats alleging "Western capitulation to Serbian aggression."² In this instance the channel seems to have been ineffective in managing internal dissent, leading three foreign service officers to resign in rapid succession and publicly criticize U.S. policy.³ How did the dissent channel figure in their efforts to urge a different course?

¹ Gurman might also have compared the establishment of the dissent channel with other bureaucratic re-organization of the State Department at the time such as the reforms designed to enable the State Department to track international human rights violations more effectively. See Barbara Keys, "Congress, Kissinger, and the Origins of Human Rights Diplomacy," *Diplomatic History* 34:5 (November 2010): 823-51; and Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-3, Documents on Global Issues, 1973-1976*.

² Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 301.

³ *Ibid.*, 312-5.

Methodological challenges may have limited Gurman's sources; she reports that dissent channel messages are filed with more routine cables and no effort is made to identify them to future readers. It would have been interesting to hear more about how Gurman located the dissent channel messages she discusses and what we might learn when additional dissents are found.

Finally, Gurman frames her book with the WikiLeaks release of 251,287 State Department cables. Such a connection might attract mainstream attention, but I wonder if the analogy is appropriate. "Cablegate," as the release has been dubbed, does help us reflect on diplomatic writing by providing, for example, unvarnished political reporting on foreign leaders, but given the telegrams Gurman cites, its relevance to diplomatic dissent is less clear.