

MARA E. KARLIN, PHD

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Nominated by President Biden and confirmed by the U.S. Senate as the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities and then led the component through multiple transitions, serving as the Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
- Led the development and implementation of the National Defense Strategy designed to guide \$850 billion defense budget
- Managed 700+ personnel with near daily briefings to the secretary of defense; in total, advised 6 secretaries of defense over the last 20 years in both Democratic and Republican administrations
- Top scholar in the field of security studies with two acclaimed books

CURRENT POSITIONS

Johns Hopkins University-School of Advanced International Studies: *Professor of Practice; Co-Lead, Security, Strategy, and Statecraft; Agora Institute Faculty Affiliate*

The Brookings Institution: *Visiting Fellow, Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology*

The American Academy of Berlin: *2024 James N. Mattis Distinguished Visitor*

The University of Pennsylvania-Perry World House: *Visiting Fellow*

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DoD)

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) (Aug 2021-February 2022; January 2023-April 2023; June 2023-December 2023)

Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (DUSD)

- Dual-hatted role responsible for managing Office of the Secretary of Defense for Policy composed of 700 people. Led two reorganizations, including establishing emerging capabilities policy office.
- Advised and assisted the Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on national security policy, military strategy, and defense policy. Represented DoD in Deputies-level national security deliberations, including on Indo-Pacific, European, and Middle East.

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) (Aug 2021-December 2023)

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities (Senate-confirmed)

- Principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on national security and defense strategy; the forces, contingency plans, and associated posture necessary to implement the defense strategy; emerging capabilities policy; and security cooperation plans and policies, to include strategy and policy for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.
- Led first integrated strategic review of the National Defense Strategy, the Nuclear Posture Review, and the Missile Defense Review in Department of Defense history. Organized robust implementation across the entire Department of Defense, including shaping multiple 850B+ defense budgets and overseeing the earliest Defense Planning Guidance in Department of Defense history.
- Enabled historic Department of Defense initiatives with allies and partners, including AUKUS; U.S. support to Ukraine's military; meaningful collaboration with allies on deterrence, escalation, and defense strategy; and major reforms to security cooperation (including establishing the Defense Security Cooperation Service).

Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) (February 2021-August 2021)

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs

- Principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on international security strategy and policy toward 147 countries, including 5 offices covering Europe/NATO; the Middle East; African Affairs; the Western Hemisphere; and Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia. Regularly participated in Deputies-level national security deliberations.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense-Strategy and Force Development (October 2014-December 2016)

- Senior policy advisor to the Secretary of Defense and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy responsible for leading office of 30+ people focused on assessing future global security environment, crafting defense strategy and policy in alignment with it, and implementing a resource-informed and executable plan to guide development of a capable U.S. military.
- Served as a key architect of several strategies, including 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), 2015 National Security Strategy, Counter-ISIL strategy, and two ground-breaking Secretary of Defense-signed strategies on global challenges. Established analytic agenda for Departmental analysis of future U.S. military, including revising criteria for building and evaluating military's size and shape in alignment with changing character of warfare.
- Developed and executed overarching policy and strategy to shape \$600B+ Defense Department budget. Oversaw two Defense Planning Guidance documents and three Departmental reviews on strategic portfolios focused on power projection in Asia and Europe, guiding more than \$20B in investments. Inaugurated effort to formally assess defense strategy and to shape allies' defense strategies/budgets.

Principal Director-Strategy and Force Development/Strategy (October 2012-October 2014)

- Supervised policy analysis on strategic planning and developing future force, including strategic framing and Middle East analysis for 2014 QDR and attendant guidance, Asia-Pacific rebalance, global and internal policy planning, force planning scenarios, allied collaboration, and resource allocation.
- Managed successful and complex merger of two distinct offices, comprising 30+ personnel, into single effective office focused on defense strategy development and analysis for senior leadership.

Multiple Positions as Career Civil Servant (Summer 2004; 2005-2009)

Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

- Advised Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on a wide range of sensitive foreign policy and national security issues, and on internal management of OUSDP affairs. Liaised across OUSDP on regional and functional affairs, including managing preparations for National Security Council decision-making, conveying guidance, recommending appropriate action, and facilitating policy initiatives.

Levant Director

- Advised Secretary of Defense on policy toward Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestinian affairs with a focus on building militaries, strengthening partners, and countering destabilizing actors.
- Guided efforts to deepen U.S.-Jordan military cooperation, expand Palestinian security sector reform, and numerous sensitive efforts involving Syria, Gulf affairs, and Iran. Led effort to rebuild Lebanese military, including designing a substantial security assistance program, organizing nearly \$400M in funding, and coordinating most senior U.S.-Lebanon defense dialogue in over two decades. Managed Department's response to 2006 Israel-Hizballah war, including evacuation of nearly 15,000 Americans.

South Asia Desk Officer

- Advised Secretary of Defense on strategic policy toward India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh with a focus on terrorism, governability, security sector reform, and nonproliferation.

- Coordinated senior Defense Department bilateral dialogues with India and Pakistan, respectively, facilitated significant expansion in U.S.-India defense relations, managed robust security cooperation efforts with Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and ran assessment of U.S.-Nepal defense relations.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: ACADEMIA

Semester at Sea (Colorado State University) (Spring 2024; Spring 2017)

- Twice taught U.S. Foreign Policy, International Security, and International Relations to undergraduates on unique study abroad program sailing around the world and exploring 10-11 countries through experiential learning. Selected by students as 2017 Convocation speaker and as “Most Inspirational” faculty member.

Johns Hopkins University-School of Advanced International Studies (JHU-SAIS)

Director of Strategic Studies (Jan 2019-Jan 2021. Associate Director 2017-18 and Acting Director 2018)

Associate Professor of Practice (June 2017-Jan 2021)

Executive Director of The Phillip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies (June 2017-Jan 2021)

- Directed and taught in top graduate program in Strategic Studies. Managed 160+ students, approximately 20 faculty and staff, and budget for both the Department and the Center. Taught foundational courses on Strategy & Policy with consistently high reviews. Organized numerous experiential domestic and international workshops on historical conflicts, including the American War in Vietnam; the American war in South Korea; the French resistance in World War II; the American Civil War; and the American Revolutionary War. Launched series on ethics in national security; tutorial on military basics; exchange on bipartisan national security collaboration; and mid-career professional development program for national security scholars, practitioners, and journalists. Served on diversity, degree, curriculum and standards, instructional planning, and COVID committees.

Johns Hopkins University, JHU-SAIS, University of Delaware (among others) (2007-2016)

- Courses taught include Crisis Simulation Seminar, Middle East Political and Security Issues, Contemporary Issues, U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: THINK TANKS AND CONGRESSIONAL COMMISSIONS

The Brookings Institution

Nonresident Senior Fellow in Foreign Policy (August 2017-Jan 2021)

- Published/spoke on defense strategy, budget, future of war, civil-military relations, Middle East and Asian security. Wrote book: *The Inheritance: America’s Military After Two Decades of War* (2021).

Syria Study Group Congressional Commission (January 2019-October 2019)

- Served on bipartisan Congressional commission examining U.S. policy options toward Syria.

National Defense Strategy Congressional Commission (January 2018-December 2018)

- Staffed bipartisan Congressional commission on National Defense Strategy and its implementation.

The RAND Corporation (February 2010-August 2012)

Adjunct Fellow

EDUCATION

Johns Hopkins University-Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

Ph.D., Strategic Studies

M.A., Strategic Studies, Middle East Studies, and International Economics *with distinction*

Newcomb College, Tulane University

B.A., Political Science and Jewish Studies, *summa cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa

Study abroad programs: Semester at Sea and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **Select Awards and Fellowships:** Secretary of Defense Distinguished Public Service Medal, Secretary of Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Award, Newcomb College Outstanding Alumna Award, Newcomb College Young Alumni Award, Secretary of Defense Outstanding Public Service Award, Secretary of Defense Group Award for Russia Strategic Work, Special Under Secretary Award for Strategic Choices & Management Review, OUSDP Award for Excellence, OUSDP Group Award for Defense Planning Guidance, OUSDP Group Award for Quadrennial Defense Review, Center for a New American Security (CNAS) Next Generation National Security Leader, among others.
- **Select Political Activities:** Defense Policy Lead for Biden-Harris Transition Team; Defense Policy Team for Biden for President Campaign; Defense Policy Lead for National Security Action; Middle East Team for Obama for President Campaign
- **Memberships:** Council on Foreign Relations Life Member.
- **Nonprofit Board Leadership:** Camp Interlaken JCC Board Member (Milwaukee, WI). Semester at Sea (Fort Collins, CO). FP4America (Washington, DC). Previously on board for Leadership Council for Women in National Security (LCWINS).
- **Books:** Mara E. Karlin, *The Inheritance: America's Military After Two Decades of War*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2021). Mara E. Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press: 2018).

ADDITIONAL PUBLICATIONS

- Mara Karlin, “The Return of Total War: Understanding—and Preparing for—a New Era of Comprehensive Conflict,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2024.
- Mara Karlin, “Developments in Syria and What Lies Ahead,” University of Pennsylvania Perry World House, December 9, 2024.
- Mara Karlin (with additional scholars), “The Assad Regime Falls. What Happens Now?” The Brookings Institution, December 9, 2024.
- Mara Karlin (with additional scholars), “How is Trump’s Reelection Likely to Affect U.S. Foreign Policy?” The Brookings Institution, November 14, 2024.
- Mara Karlin (with additional scholars), “What will Nasrallah’s Death Mean for the Middle East?” The Brookings Institution, September 30, 2024.
- Mara Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes, “How to Do More with Less in the Middle East,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 15, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin and Melissa Dalton, “U.S. Posture in the Middle East,” edited volume (The Brookings Institution, 2020).
- Mara E. Karlin and Jim Mitre, “Three Urgent Questions for the Air Force’s New Chief of Staff,” *Defense One*, July 28, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin and Leah Dreyfuss, “Military Posture: China and the United States,” chapter in edited volume (The Brookings Institution, 2021).
- Mara Karlin and James Golby, “The Case for Rethinking the Politicization of the Military,” *Task and Purpose*, June 12, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin and Alice Friend “Toward a Concept of Good Civilian Guidance” *War on the Rocks*, May 29, 2020.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “If the U.S. Navy Sinks Iranian Gunboats in the Persian Gulf, What Might the Outcome Be?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace-Middle East Center, April 30, 2020.
- Mara Karlin, Alice Friend, and Loren DeJonge Schulman, “Why Did the Pentagon Ever Give Trump the Option of Killing Soleimani?”, *The Washington Post*, January 10, 2020.
- Mara Karlin, “Three Key Insights for U.S. Policy in Light of Recent Escalation with Iran,” The Brookings Institution, January 29, 2020.
- Mara Karlin, “Civilian Oversight Inside the Pentagon: Who Does It and How?”, edited volume (Oxford University Press, 2020).
- Mara Karlin, “On Syria, Washington Cannot Simply Throw Up Its Hands,” The Brookings Institution, September 24, 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin and Leah Dreyfuss, “All that Xi Wants: China Attempts to Ace Bases Overseas,” The Brookings Institution, September 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin, Loren DeJonge Schulman, and Alice Hunt Friend, “Two Cheers for Esper’s Plan to Reassert Civilian Control of the Pentagon,” *Defense One*, September 9, 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin and John E. McLaughlin, “How to Name This Era in US Foreign Policy?,” *Global Brief*, Summer/Fall 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “By Accepting Russian S-400s, Has Turkey Taken a Strategic Decision to Distance Itself From the NATO Alliance?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace- Middle East Center, June 25, 2019.

- Mara E. Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes, “Commitment Issues: Where Should the U.S. Withdrawal from the Middle East Stop,” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin and Tamara Cofman Wittes, “America’s Middle East Purgatory: The Case for Doing Less,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “Empowered Decentralization: A City-based Strategy For Rebuilding Libya,” The Brookings Institution, February 11, 2019.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Implications Of Artificial Intelligence For National Security Strategy,” The Brookings Institution, November 1, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Christopher Skaluba, “What Has Become Clear To You? Reflections On Assessing The National Defense Strategy,” *War on the Rocks*, October 16, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Art of Creating Power: Freedman on Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Alice Hunt Friend, “Military Worship Hurts U.S. Democracy,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, September 21, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Military Superiority: More Than Meets The Eye,” *War on the Rocks*, June 28, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Melissa G. Dalton, “Toward A Smaller, Smarter Force Posture in the Middle East,” *Defense One*, August 26, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Michael S. Chase, “Navigating Asia’s Stormy Seas: Regional Perspectives on US-China Competition,” *The Diplomat*, August 7, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “Policy Roundtable: The Pursuit of Military Superiority,” *Texas National Security Review*, June 26, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Before You Help a Fragile State’s Military, Ask These Uncomfortable Questions,” *Defense One*, June 21, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “Roundtable 10-14 on The Future of War: A History,” *International Security Studies Forum (ISSF)*, May 18, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Frances Z. Brown, “Friends With Benefits: What the Reliance on Local Partners Means for U.S. Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 8, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, et al, “Around the Halls: Brookings experts discuss the implications of President Trump’s Iran nuclear deal announcement,” The Brookings Institution, May 8, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Syria’s Civil War Is Far From Over,” The Brookings Institution, March 23, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Israel’s Coming War With Hezbollah: A New Conflict May Be Inevitable,” *Foreign Affairs*, February 21, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “After 7 Years Of War, Assad Has Won In Syria. What’s Next For Washington?” The Brookings Institution, February 13, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “How to Read the 2018 National Defense Strategy,” The Brookings Institution, January 21, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Melissa G. Dalton, “How Should the Pentagon Reshape Its Mideast Posture? Four Indicators to Watch,” *Defense One*, January 20, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and James Golby, “Why “Best Military Advice” is Bad for the Military—and Worse for Civilians,” *Orbis*, January 8, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin and Paula Thornhill, “The Chairman The Pentagon Needs,” *War on the Rocks*, January 5, 2018.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Why Military Assistance Programs Disappoint: Minor Tools Can’t Solve Major Problems,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2017.

- Mara E. Karlin, “Recommendations For Future National Defense Strategy,” The Brookings Institution, December 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Bridging America’s Civil-Military Gap — At Sea,” Defense One, November 11, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin and Ilan Goldenberg, “Ending the Iran Deal Is an Invitation to War,” The Atlantic, October 10, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin and Jon B. Alterman, “As Independence Vote Nears, Iraqi Kurds Play a Risky Game of Chicken,” Defense One, August 29, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin and Melissa G. Dalton, “It’s Long Past Time to Rethink US Military Posture in the Gulf,” Defense One, August 2, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin and Christopher Skaluba, “Strategic Guidance For Countering The Proliferation Of Strategic Guidance,” War on the Rocks, July 20, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin, “You Get Deterrence, And You Get Deterrence, Everybody Gets Deterrence!” War on the Rocks, May 5, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin and Loren DeJonge Schulman, “Keeping Up Civ-Mil Relations,” War on the Rocks, April 19, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin, Loren DeJonge Shulman, and Shawn Brimley, “For An Audience of One: Re- booting Agenda SecDef,” War on the Rocks, March 21, 2017.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Chapter 5: Tunisia,” in Understanding the Implications of the ‘Arab Uprisings’ and U.S. Military Cooperation, ed. Jennifer Moroney and Ali Nader (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, July 2014).
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society (Review),” The Review of Middle East Studies 46, no. 1 (Summer 2012).
- Mara E. Karlin and Christopher Clary, “The Pak-Saudi Nuke, and How to Stop It,” The American Interest, VII, no. 6 (July/August 2012): 24-31.
- Mara E. Karlin and Christopher Clary, “Saudi Arabia’s Reform Gamble,” Survival 53, no. 5 (October-November 2011): 15-20.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Role of Armed Forces in Post-Conflict Sri Lanka: Lessons Learned from a Global Perspective,” in Challenges of Post-Conflict Sri Lanka (Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University Press, 2011), 62-73.
- Mara E. Karlin and Andrew J. Tabler, “Washington Should Plan for a Post-Assad Syria,” CNN.com, May 26, 2011. (Reprint)
- Mara E. Karlin and Andrew J. Tabler, “Obama’s Push-Pull Strategy: How Washington Should Plan for a Post-Assad Syria,” Foreign Affairs, May 25, 2011.
- Mara E. Karlin and Eric S. Edelman, “Fool Me Twice: How the United States Lost Lebanon—Again,” World Affairs, May/June 2011.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Druze Factor,” Foreign Affairs, February 16, 2011.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Why the U.S. Needs an Envoy in Syria,” The Daily Star (Lebanon), January 26, 2011. (Reprint)
- Mara E. Karlin, “Why the US Needs an Ambassador in Damascus,” Bitterlemons-International, January 20, 2011.
- Mara E. Karlin and Caitlin Talmadge, “Under the Radar Rapprochement: Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds,” Foreign Policy Magazine, June 24, 2010.

- Mara E. Karlin, “Lebanon’s Scud Row: Why Hezbollah Will Stay Armed and Dangerous,” *Foreign Affairs*, May 13, 2010.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Where is Beirut’s cogent defense plan?” *The Daily Star (Lebanon)*, March 30, 2010.
- Mara E. Karlin and Tony Badran, “The Pretense of Reform,” *The Washington Times*, October 23, 2009.
- Mara E. Karlin, “Will Syria Fold?” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, August 13, 2009.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Day After—Don’t Give Up on Lebanon,” *Middle East Times*, June 6, 2009.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Syrian and Lebanese tracks should be a priority,” *The Daily Star (Lebanon)*, May 20, 2009. (Reprint)
- Mara E. Karlin, “Syria-Lebanon First,” *Bitterlemons-International*, May 14, 2009.
- Christopher Clary and Mara E. Karlin, “A Fine Balance: India and Middle East Diplomacy,” *Indian Express (India)*, May 9, 2009.
- Mara E. Karlin, “A Strong Lebanese Army is Good for Israel,” *Haaretz (Israel)*, March 22, 2009.
- Mara E. Karlin, “The Terrorist Rolodex: How Islamists Join Terrorist Organizations and Coalesce (Review),” *SAIS Review* 24, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2004): 201-2.