

Abstract

Thirty years after the implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, congressional and military leaders are calling for an assessment and revision of the act that will posture the Department of Defense to meet uncertain and increasingly challenging threats. This project researched the environment leading up to Goldwater-Nichols, the impacts of implementing the act, and the acquisition reform efforts over the last 30 years in order to understand the current calls for acquisition reform and the potential impacts of proposed legislation.

Methods

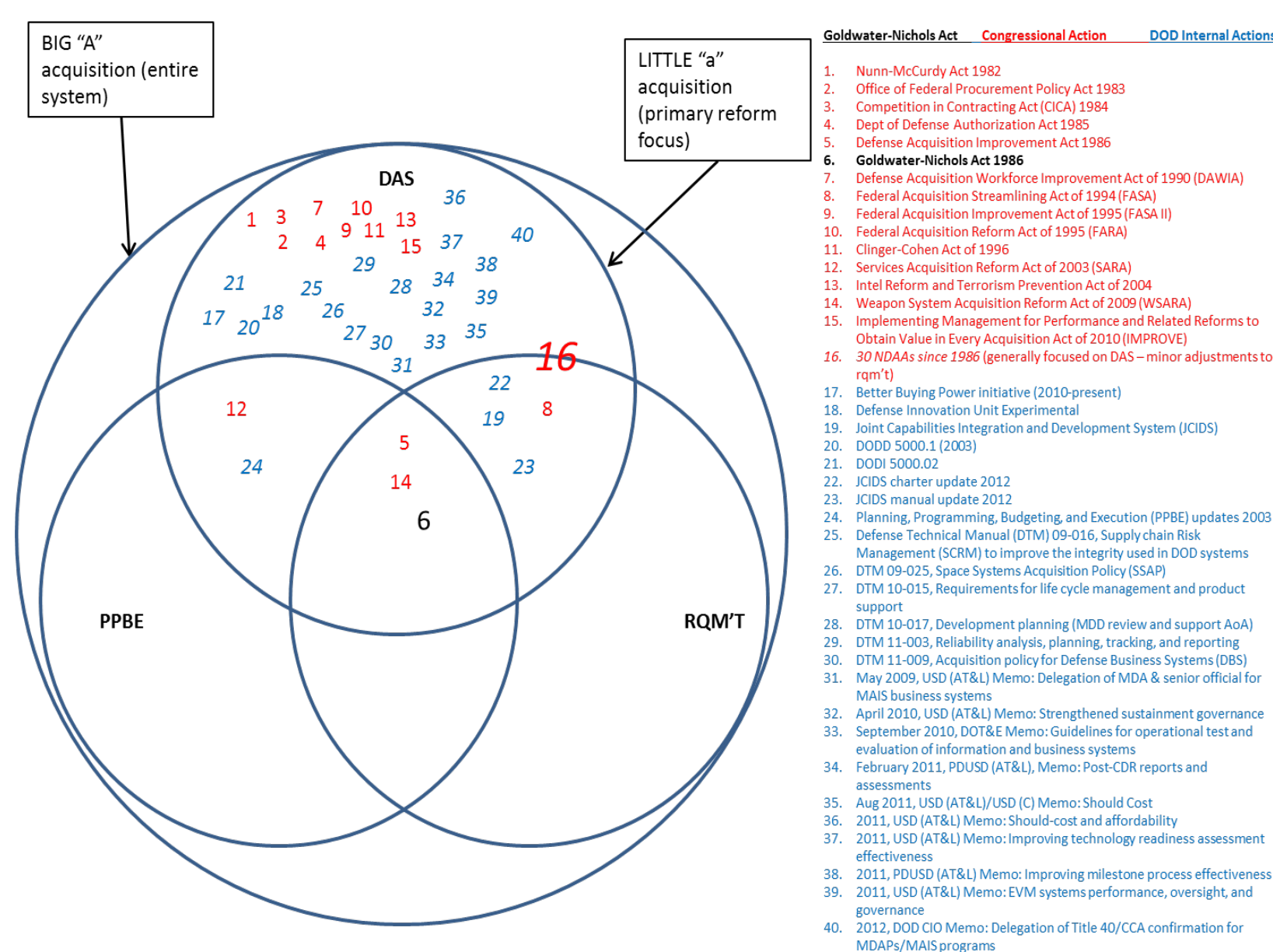
- Literature review of legislative acts, articles, books, government-commissioned reports, and other information resources
- Interviews with senior representatives from legislative bodies, DOD Acquisition leaders, and senior military officers
- Analysis of the impacts of past acquisition reform efforts in order to assess potential success or failure of current or proposed acquisition-related legislation and policy

Research Summary

- Goldwater-Nichols and Packard Commission served as the catalyst for change
 - Came about due to the frustration of operational and acquisition failures
 - Significant re-organization of DOD, controlled oversight of defense acquisition, 9 recommendations by Packard Commission to improve the outcomes of MDAPs
- 30 years of legislative efforts provided incremental implementation of Packard Commission recommendations
 - 40+ legislative acts or included language
 - Focus on workforce, competition, commercial procurement and cost control

Results

- 2016 and 2017 NDAs target
 - Re-establishing authority/responsibility of Service Chiefs, SAEs, PMs
 - Reinstitute USD(R&E) as the Defense Acquisition Officer and Chief Technology Officer, dispersing USD(AT&L)
 - Provisions that circumvent traditional approach to defense acquisition to allow for rapid fielding of innovative solutions
- Reform efforts rarely target big “A” acquisition
 - Targeting little “a” and/or requirements fails to create impactful and lasting change
- Current NDAA reform efforts will not revolutionize acquisition, but will continue incremental improvements



Recommendations

- Ensure future reform addresses all three pillars of the Defense Acquisitions (PPBE, Requirements, Defense Acquisition System), not just two pillars.
- Execute “Biennial Authorization” ACAT II & III pilot programs w/ certain statutory exemptions through IOC to determine long-term feasibility.
- Paradigm shift of “life cycle” lengths. Shorter life cycle expectations to keep pace with technology cycles, increase competition, & promote more widespread innovation.