

Toward Restructuring National Security

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Significant changes must be made in the structures and processes of the U.S. national security apparatus.

—United States Commission on National Security/
21st Century, February 2001

THE GOLDWATER-Nichols Department of Defense (DoD) Reorganization Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-433), passed two decades ago, has served our nation well. It strengthened combatant commanders, raised the quality of joint staffs, and advanced joint force operations. We owe a debt to its authors. Goldwater-Nichols helped move the American military from the independent, barely deconflicted operations of the early 1980s to the sustained interoperability that has proved so effective in our present era of near-continuous combat.

For all its success, the focus of Goldwater-Nichols was limited. Though it was spawned largely from a Senate study which examined the national security apparatus writ large, Goldwater-Nichols aimed only at the DoD. By focusing on military integration, and bypassing the other national-security-related departments and agencies, the act reinforced an existing “over-militarization of thinking in the West.”¹ In his book *The American Way of War*, Russell Weigley ascribes this phenomenon to an image of US foreign policy that most Americans carried forward from World War II, a decisive, total war ending in unconditional surrender for the Axis powers.

As Goldwater-Nichols enters its third decade of service, our security situation has changed radically. The Cold War, which largely shaped the national security apparatus, ended shortly after Goldwater-Nichols was enacted. Globalization and the knowledge economy, underwritten by enormous advances in information technologies, have transformed every aspect of society, including national security. Far from being immune to

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this change, military strategy, operations, and tactics are at its nexus. We have exploited advanced information technologies to increase effectiveness dramatically. The product of our military capabilities is far different today than it was in 1986.

Technology has not been the only change. The global political order transformed with the collapse of our only peer competitor, the emergence of new centers of state power, and the rise of nonstate groups with strategic capabilities. These historic shifts altered the priorities and structures of national security.

As we adjust our military organizations and capabilities to this new environment, we face a series of challenges that constrain our options. We must posture to fight hot wars of indeterminate length in Iraq and Afghanistan while finding ways to pay for high reset bills, growing personnel costs (especially in health care), rising operations and maintenance costs brought on by aging fleets and infrastructure, and spiraling modernization costs. We must also anticipate shifts in federal fiscal priorities driven by an aging population and commensurate increases in social services spending. Furthermore, if we are to retain our position as the world's sole superpower, we must be prepared for—and capable of—achieving our national security objectives across the spectrum of operations, not just a portion of that spectrum.

Given the extent of change in technology, geopolitics, and economics, it is only prudent to adjust our basic national security structures and policies accordingly. If we want national security capabilities and institutions that will thrive in the emerging environment—not simply cope with it—we must be willing to restructure our national security tools.

Unfortunately, we face significant challenges in updating our national security apparatus to match our changed security environment—entrenched constituencies and institutions that routinely oppose fundamental change. One need only consider the ultimate impact of the Base Force (1992), the Bottom-Up Review (1993), the Commission on Roles and Missions (1995), the National Defense Panel (1997), and the 1997, 2001, and 2005 Quadrennial Defense Reviews. Each of these comprised monumental efforts, creating serious recommendations—the majority of which remain unimplemented. We cannot underestimate difficulties inherent in attempting even modest, much less substantial, change to our security structures and concepts.

In early 2001, the United States Commission on National Security in the 21st Century (USCNS/21), also known as the Hart-Rudman Commission—after a two-and-a-half-year effort by a distinguished group of

national security experts—made 50 recommendations that were perhaps the most comprehensive and prescient to date with respect to restructuring our nation's security institutions.² In February 2007, former senator Gary Hart summed up the acceptance of the effort: "I am sorry to say that of those 50 specific recommendations, no more than two or three have been adopted."³ In 2002, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) initiated its project, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols (B-GN)*, recommending significant defense reform, completing the effort in 2006⁴—key recommendations have not been enacted.

We must continue to relentlessly pursue appropriate change in our national security architecture and overcome institutional resistance. The next administration has an opportunity to do this by expanding the next Quadrennial Defense Review (2009) beyond the DoD. Given the environment in which we find ourselves today, and the future we can see emerging, an across-the-board redesign of our security structures, relationships, and resourcing arrangements is very much required for all the reasons so well articulated in the USCNS/21 and B-GN studies. A new defense review, even perfectly executed by DoD in isolation, will simply not move our larger national security architecture to any significant degree.

To embark on fundamental redesign of the roles and missions of our larger national security establishment, we need to replicate the audacity, toughness, and vision of the authors of the previously mentioned national security reform efforts. As a starting point, we must focus our restructure along at least three axes: integrating all elements of national power, valuing knowledge as a prerequisite to action, and achieving service interdependence.

Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economics: Achieving Synergy with All Our Security Institutions

While Goldwater-Nichols addressed better integration of military forces, what we need today, and will need even more so in the future, is vastly improved unity of effort⁵ across all the pillars of our nation's security—diplomacy, information, military, and economics (DIME). America's power does not rest in our military alone. We are strongest when we bring the full weight of national power to bear. Applied with strategic skill, these four levers of national power—when acting in concert—can

deliver decisive effects at particular points in time, often at less cost in blood, treasure, and national prestige, than can military action alone.

The need for integrated effort across all our instruments of power is well known. It is the reason for the creation of the National Security Council in 1947. However, the world has changed substantially in the past 60 years. We now face unconventional threats with the capability to create strategic effects. To defeat small, innovative, and adaptive threats, we need to apply our DIME options using information age economies of speed, not just industrial age economies of scale. Unfortunately, we are poorly organized to do so, our DIME structures and relationships having been forged in the aftermath of World War II with the National Security Act of 1947. As mentioned earlier, the security environment of 2007 is a far cry from that of 1947—it is long past time for a change.

As noted during Adm Michael Mullen's confirmation as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Fundamental to change within the Armed Forces is agreement on the appropriate distribution of roles and missions among the military departments and several independent agencies. The last two Quadrennial Defense Reviews have acknowledged major shifts in the strategic environment facing the Nation, but recommended no changes to roles and missions and only minor adjustments to the form and size of the defense establishment.⁶

As we revisit roles and missions across the DoD, we must integrate our results with the “several independent agencies” on the east side of the Potomac River. Just as military strategy is a subset of national strategy, military roles and missions are subsets of national security roles and missions. It does little good to perfect military capabilities and concepts of operations (CONOPS) in isolation from the other elements of national power. Our greatest national security challenge today is to build a truly integrated architecture that optimizes capabilities in the DIME domains—an architecture that melds these capabilities in the context of long-range strategies and plans to defeat the broader spectrum of threats facing the nation.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance: Knowledge as a Decisive Weapon

The information age, perhaps more than any other factor, has brought the seams between the elements of DIME into stark relief. We can no

longer afford the simplicity of four instruments of national power operating in near isolation from one another. War is not fought only within the military element—diplomatic overtures, information campaigns, and economic incentives all must play in a coordinated way. In the knowledge age intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) is the key integrating element for effective strategic and operational policy development. Yet our current architectures and frameworks for melding national and military intelligence ways and means toward a common end are antiquated. Consider the warrantless wiretaps debate—regardless of where one comes down on the civil liberties aspect, regulating intelligence collection according to laws written before cell phones and the Internet existed is strategically untenable.

There is a natural tendency for institutions to use new systems as adjuncts to current capabilities. For example, we initially used desktop computers primarily as expensive typewriters. We embraced them because they made word processing far easier. It took time for us to recognize their transformative power; far from making current systems more efficient, networked computers opened up entirely new capabilities. We eventually restructured our offices and ways of conducting business to realize these capabilities. Similarly, the US Navy initially employed aircraft carriers primarily “in support of” surface fleet operations. Carrier-based aircraft enhanced the accuracy of naval guns and protected the fleet from surprise. However, time and events (such as *Taranto*⁷ and Pearl Harbor) eventually led the Navy to recognize aircraft carriers as the supported element, with the rest of the surface fleet operating “in support of.” Fundamental changes in naval organization, equipment, and CONOPS followed.

The lessons learned are twofold. Radically new technologies can grow from supporting to supported status, and it will take time for established institutions to accept the new reality. Institutions typically value emerging technologies solely in terms of contributions to present missions and CONOPS. It takes time to recognize the new missions they offer and the new CONOPS they demand.

This is the situation we find ourselves in today with ISR. ISR is currently moving from a supporting capability to the leading edge of national security operations. ISR—and cyber capability—will be key in countering weapons of mass destruction and net-enabled transnational terrorist forces that threaten international stability, and thereby our own nation’s

security. It will lead the fight by the year 2025 and will be the key suite of capabilities to get us from here to there.

During the Cold War, we had the advantage of a relatively static adversary. We could periodically peer over the Iron Curtain to fix the enemy's position, identify his capabilities, and assess his intentions. Against this massive, monolithic, and largely predictable threat, a "shooter heavy" footprint was appropriate.

Today, our enemies are evolving, adapting, and highly malleable. We can only imagine the ways in which they will threaten us. Like a liquid that gravitates toward our weakest points, they aim to defy our grasp. Because they infest urban areas and hide among civilian populations, finding the enemy has become a great challenge. Finding is one part of the problem—sorting enemies from the civilian populations in which they hide is the other. In this sense, knowledge—having always been key—is assuming precedence over kinetics as the prerequisite "weapon" of war. As with every other aspect of the information age, victory will go to those who create and exploit knowledge faster than their opponents, and ever increasingly in ambiguous and uncertain situations. Meeting this challenge requires a shift from the Cold War mind-set that placed ISR in a merely supporting role to a new understanding that in the twenty-first century, ISR will perhaps be the key to achieving US national security objectives.

Make no mistake about it; we still need "fifth generation" systems such as the F-22 to rapidly defeat evolving advanced threats as part of a joint approach. We must always stay a generation ahead of any conceivable threat—that is what gives us our asymmetric advantage. However, we must also capitalize on all the capabilities resident in modern systems and take a transformational, vice traditional, view of those capabilities. We are in an era when we can already kill practically any target we can find. Our chief challenge is to *find-fix-track* low-signature targets, however fleeting and unique they may be. Without this capability, precise shooters are of little use.

Today's enemies are not massing on the other side of the Fulda Gap. One of their primary goals is to negate our force application advantage by escaping detection. This is why ISR now makes up the majority of our current operations. It is why we fly far more ISR sorties every day than strike or airlift sorties. Of course, the sortie ledger is dependent upon the character of the conflict, but the fact remains that ISR is in great demand.

One of our significant challenges is how we will satisfy the growing demand for ISR in a future of constrained defense resources. One way is to capitalize on the sensor capabilities inherent in our modern aircraft. Traditional nomenclature constrains understanding of capability in this regard. For example, the F-22 is not just an F-22—it's an F-, A-, B-, E-, EA-, RC-22. It's a flying ISR sensor that will allow us to conduct network-centric warfare inside adversary battlespace from the first moments of any conflict, in addition to its vast array of attack capabilities. The fact that it's not opposed by like fighters means we can depend on those robust capabilities all the more—if we understand this new relationship between ISR and kinetic capabilities. This kind of capability-based perspective will be increasingly required in an era of constrained defense resources. While we will still build dedicated ISR platforms, we must incorporate ISR capabilities into all our platforms—air, space, sea, land, and cyber. Doing so will also require adjusting concepts and processes for the manner in which we allocate, plan, and employ these systems.

In the future we will judge the value of platforms in terms of their ability to sense and communicate, as well as by how they perform in their traditional roles. Think of this approach as the observer effect extended to modern warfare. The simple act of observation causes targets to react. When we observe an enemy we immediately change his activities. Based on his reaction, we can bring all elements of American power—DIME—to bear as needed. However, it all starts with our ISR advantage. ISR has never been more important than it is today—and that importance will only increase for the foreseeable future.

Interdependence: Stopping Duplication, Increasing Effectiveness

Since the advent of Goldwater-Nichols, a joint approach has moved contingency concepts of operations from independent, deconflicted service-oriented operations to sustained interoperability. We now need to take the next step—the move from service interoperability to service interdependence. In light of prevailing uninformed views concerning the current engagements in Southwest Asia, it is instructive to briefly review the way America fights wars, and that essentially boils down to this: individual services do not fight wars—combatant commands fight wars under the unifying vision of a joint force commander (JFC).

Jointness means that among our four services, a separately developed and highly specialized array of capabilities is provided to a JFC—his or her job is to assemble a plan from among this “menu” of capabilities, applying the appropriate capabilities, at the right place, at the right time to create the desired effect. It does not mean four separate services deploy to a fight and simply align under a single commander. Nor does jointness mean everybody necessarily gets an equal share of the action.

The reason joint force operations create synergies is because this approach allows each service to develop, cultivate, and provide capabilities that spring from its core competencies. When a single service attempts to achieve war-fighting independence instead of embracing interdependence, jointness unravels; war-fighting effectiveness is reduced; and costly redundancies, gaps, and conflicts likely abound. The last thing we need to do today as we face a resource-constrained future is to turn back the clock on Goldwater-Nichols by allowing services to develop excessively redundant capabilities, thereby rejecting the very premise of joint war fighting.

Unnecessary and Costly Redundancy—An Example

The debate over the development, acquisition, control, and employment of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) illustrates the necessity (and the benefits) of adopting an interdependent approach. The services’ inherent responsibility to the American taxpayer to operate effectively and efficiently is even more critical in light of increasing resource constraints. In this context, the cost of duplicating multiple UAV program offices, independent training operations, logistics and maintenance operations, and intelligence support facilities; sustaining multiple procurement contracts; and establishing separate employment CONOPS that create seams requiring additional investment in command and control architectures that are redundant and cumbersome deserves careful scrutiny. This approach does not pass the common-sense test with respect to economy of effort, and it severely complicates efforts to get ISR information to America’s joint forces around the world.

Each of the Quadrennial Defense Reviews to date has recognized the benefits of ensuring joint efforts are efficiently managed and resourced for effectiveness. Advantages to the nation derive from designating a single focal point—a single service—to lead theater-capable (medium- and high-altitude) UAV design, acquisition, and procurement. A single ser-

vice merging and streamlining the separate-service acquisition stovepipes that currently exist for theater-capable UAVs could eliminate costly duplication of effort. Immediate benefits would include reduced research, development, testing, and evaluation costs as well as decreased per-unit procurement costs resulting from greater economies of scale.

Joint Publication 2.0, *Joint Intelligence*, states, “Because operational needs for intelligence often exceed intelligence capabilities, prioritization of collection and analysis efforts and ISR resource allocation are vital aspects of intelligence planning.”⁸ Demand for UAVs exceeds supply today and will continue to exceed it even after the services build all their currently programmed UAVs. This reinforces the notion that the best possible way to get ISR from theater-capable UAVs to our joint forces is by allocating the capability to where it is needed most across the entire theater. It argues against assigning theater-capable UAVs organically to units, thereby denying their benefit to the entire theater joint fight.

If we wish to bring the full measure of our military power to bear, we must evolve past the current practice of permitting individual services to seek self-sufficiency. We must embrace the necessity—and the benefits—of service interdependence. The goal is to provide a highly developed array of specialized capabilities from which the JFC can choose, without suffering from either significant overlap or gaping holes, or conflicting concepts of operations. The price to be paid, however, for seamless interdependence is the requirement to surrender the “what’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is joint” attitude—each service cannot continue to acquire and wield every tool in the toolkit for itself.

We must seek interservice reliance, recognizing that this affords us the ability to specialize in, and to capitalize on, individual service strengths. This is the crux of jointness—not each service fighting its own battle in a carved out piece of space. Such fluidity across the entire battlespace, however, requires interoperable equipment in the regimes where service operating domains do overlap. This is not possible, however, without the kind of equipment interoperability that starts on the design table: ergo, the appropriateness of—and rationale for—an arrangement where one service oversees the acquisition and standardization of theater-capable UAVs.

It is also important to recall that the war on terrorism is, by definition, “global.” At some point theater-capable UAVs will be allocated to theaters other than Central Command—perhaps in locations without a significant US ground presence. A plan that assigns theater-capable UAVs to each

division means that if a division isn't in the war zone then neither are the UAVs. This is not the best approach to deliver ISR war-fighting capability to our combatant commands.

The objective of a joint approach is to get theater-capable UAV ISR distribution to be as transparent to users as the global positioning system (GPS) satellite signal is to all the services. GPS is 100-percent owned and operated by one service—the Air Force—and yet it is used by all the service components without any concern. We can do that with theater-capable UAVs if the DoD embraces and adopts a joint approach to UAV acquisition and operations.

Imagine what GPS would look like had the DoD lacked the foresight to give the responsibility for that function to a single service. In all likelihood we would have three separate systems, marginally compatible and interoperable, and operating under different schemas. Plans would have to account for when and where you were employing, and what system would be providing your time/position fix. The Army's system would be optimized over major-threat land masses . . . the Navy's over the open seas . . . the Air Force's to fill gaps and stitch seams. Not to take this case too far, the point is that the longer you let multiple agents build proprietary solutions, the harder it is to stitch everything together into an interoperable whole, the greater the compromises of keeping legacy systems alive, and ultimately the longer you put off interdependence.

The UAV case is but one example of the potential of service interdependency. In an environment of increasingly constrained resources, neither the taxpayers nor the DoD can afford the inefficiencies that result from individual service stovepipes. There is little value added when multiple services build separate design and procurement efforts for the same capability that will ultimately be up to JFCs to employ.

As this article is written, the Air Force has diverted over 20,000 Airmen to drive convoys, conduct interrogations, guard prisoners, and conduct a host of traditional Army core functions in Southwest Asia. The Air Force is helping the Army in its time of need, but does this division of labor make sense when, at the same time, the Army is spending billions of dollars and maintaining thousands of personnel to operate the same class of UAVs the Air Force has been operating and sustaining for over a decade? This is contrary to an interdependent approach and is an example of why we need a serious review and course correction on service roles and missions.

With interdependency, each service builds upon its core strengths. Attractive as this may sound, however, interdependency will not happen in a vacuum. It will require specific actions on the part of leadership across the services and support, endorsement, and the commitment to make the right—albeit courageous decisions—from DoD senior civilian leadership. These relationships should extend to interagency and multinational partners. Such an approach will culminate in real joint training. Because we will fight the way we train, real interdependence must start on the training fields, not the battlefield.

Finally, and most importantly, interdependence requires trust among military professionals. Absent this professional trust, the DoD will have lost an opportunity to create and harness the interservice synergies that result from building upon—rather than duplicating—each service's strengths.


Summary

The United States faces a series of challenges that will test our leadership and imagination. We must simultaneously adjust to the opportunities and challenges of the information age plus the new security situation formed after the Cold War, the growth of new centers of state power, and the emergence of nonstate groups with the capability to achieve strategic effects. We must accomplish all this in a demanding fiscal environment formed by massive resource requirements driven by explosive growth in nondiscretionary federal spending for social services.

Given these realities, we would be smart to adjust our security focus around knowledge. Information is key to achieving desirable outcomes across the spectrum of operations. Among the areas deserving special emphasis are enabling economies of speed across all elements of national power—diplomatic, information, military, and economic—and raising the priority of ISR to reflect its criticality in each of these domains.

The structures we built over the post–World War II decades are ill-suited to today's environment. The National Security Act of 1947 forged unification of armed forces, but at a price of compromise. To assuage the variety of parochial interests of the day to get the construct enacted, this act contained built-in inefficiencies, overlaps in functions, and out-of-balance responsibilities—all of which are too costly to sustain today. Organizational evolution has not kept pace with events.

As the DoD has evolved in the post–Cold War environment, Goldwater-Nichols has created unintended consequences. It has resulted in a focus on military integration, but failing to develop a corresponding focus on incorporating all the elements of national power has delayed us from achieving true integration of all the pillars of national security. It has also led to an unsophisticated interpretation of jointness that drives some to seek homogeneity among the services, while others use “jointness” as an excuse to seek participation in every possible mission. This has led some services to seek self-sufficiency rather than synergy—and to the degree they have been allowed to do so has actually resulted in divergence from the tenets of Goldwater-Nichols by some as they replicate other services’ core competencies. It is time for an honest and comprehensive review of service roles and missions using interdependence as the new benchmark.

Beyond service roles and missions, we have the capability to create incredible synergy by embracing jointness across all the elements of national power. Accordingly, it is time to also conduct a fundamental review of our entire national security establishment leading to an appropriate restructure. Building on the reviews and recommendations of the USCNS/21 and B-GN efforts, the next administration should seize the opportunity presented by the 2009 Quadrennial Defense Review and expand it beyond the DoD. More importantly, it’s time for less study and more action. Such a restructure will undoubtedly prove difficult to implement. Regardless, we must seek fundamental change in our national security architecture if we are to succeed in meeting the security challenges that the future will bring to our nation. 

Notes

1. George F. Kennan, *Russia, the Atom, and the West* (New York: Harper, 1958), 18.
2. The three reports and recommendations of the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century can be found at <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/nssg/Reports/reports.htm>.
3. Mickey McCarter, “Revisiting the Hart-Rudman Commission,” *HSToday*, quoting former senator Hart at the National Press Club, 7 February 2007, http://www.hstoday.us/Washington_Today/02122007_Washington_Today_Gary_Hart_Commission.cfm?storyid=72, 12 Feb 2007.
4. Beyond Goldwater-Nichols (BG-N) was conducted in three phases completed as follows: Phase I—March 2004; Phase II—July 2005; Phase III—July 2006. Reports for each phase can be found at www.csis.org/isp/bgn/.
5. The DoD defines *unity of effort* as the “coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization.” *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 12 April 2001 (As Amended through 12 July 2007), http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf.

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6. “Advance Questions for Admiral Michael G. Mullen, USN, Nominee for the Position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” Senate Committee on Armed Services, 31 July 2007, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2007/July/Mullen%2007-31-07.pdf>.

7. The Battle of Taranto occurred 11–12 November 1940. This was the first all-aircraft naval attack in history conducted by the British Royal Navy by carrier aircraft in the Mediterranean against the Italian fleet harbored at Taranto.

8. Joint Publication 2.0, *Joint Intelligence*, 22 June 2007, II-6.