A Time for Action

The Case for Interagency Deliberate Planning

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The debate over interagency reform has been raging for many years, and the emerging consensus is increasingly clear. Current US national security execution mechanisms, conceived and resourced for a Cold War security environment, now exhibit a systemic inability to achieve national strategic objectives in the dynamic post–Cold War era. Although various diagnoses and prescriptions abound in a growing body of literature, they collectively describe a failure of the interagency to effectively integrate and employ America's considerable advantages in each of the military, economic, diplomatic, and informational instruments of national power. Now, nearly two decades since the implosion of a coalescing Soviet threat, these systemic weaknesses can no longer be explained away by differences in the stated strategies or leadership styles of three US presidents. Now, as the United States prepares to elect its fourth president and 20th Congress since the fall of the Berlin Wall, it can no longer afford to allow political, cultural, or structural barriers to prevent progress toward systemic reform. Now—as the opportunities narrow to influence a globalizing world toward peace, prosperity, and the rule of law—is a time for action.

This policy analysis proposes the statutory establishment of interagency deliberate planning as a necessary and practical first step to mature interagency execution. The primary purpose of this initial step is to evolve national-security-related operations from mere coordination of individual

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agency efforts to an objectives-oriented synchronization, integration, and interdependence of combined interagency operations. The secondary purpose of interagency deliberate planning is to identify specific capability gaps and overlaps that may then be resourced appropriately over time within an integrated and prioritized national security budget. The article presents this proposal by leveraging the extensive body of national security reform literature to characterize both the problem and the major categories of options already proposed. The article then draws a parallel between the unity of effort challenges now faced at the interagency level with those successfully addressed on a smaller scale among the military services through reforms in the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Through this historical parallel, the authors highlight the portions of the Goldwater-Nichols Act reforms that established clear strategy-to-task links between ends, ways, and means as the most prescient missing ingredients now required to achieve interagency unity of effort. Finally, the article establishes a rationale and action plan for implementing interagency deliberate planning in a manner that is responsive to the systemic problems identified and overcomes the barriers that have frustrated significant national security reform in the recent past.

The Debate over Interagency Reform

The Cold War presented a complex long-term challenge for national security practitioners who manage the US instruments of power: military, diplomatic, economic, and informational. However, the well-defined and pervasive threat of Soviet expansion also served as a coalescing force that enabled interagency unity of effort without systemic process controls. The post–Cold War environment presents US national security practitioners with an equally complex yet far more dynamic security landscape that lacks a predominant coalescing threat. This major shift in geopolitics and the vacuum of influence left by the abrupt departure of a second superpower now require effective process controls to prioritize US national security objectives and to plan and execute coherent interagency strategies to counter threats and shape the future. Two foundational questions underpinning the current debate over interagency reform are (1) Why is the existing system no longer sufficient to generate unity of effort? and (2) Is legislation required to achieve real reform?

The National Security Act of 1947

Why do the interagency reforms in the National Security Act of 1947, that presumably enabled sufficient unity of effort during the Cold War, now appear insufficient as the US faces another long-term challenge to security? Clearly whatever the failures of the 1947 legislation to achieve its stated intent to generate integration at the highest levels of government, the benefits certainly outweighed the shortcomings throughout the Cold War competition between the United States and the Soviet Union. The National Security Council (NSC) system was broad enough to incorporate the equities of all national security departments and agencies yet flexible enough to adapt to the needs and styles of different presidents. Perhaps the answer lies in the classic security dilemma posed by the Cold War environment. The necessary yet overriding emphasis on global military deterrence and the resulting alignment of resources may well have masked a lack of sufficient depth in the statutory reforms to the interagency process.

This lack of depth in the 1947 interagency reforms only became apparent in the post–Cold War environment. The crafters of the National Security Act of 1947 envisioned that the coordination mechanisms established by the law would lead to "integrated policies and procedures." It is now clear that did not happen. The last two decades are replete with well-documented examples of interagency planning and execution shortcomings. The ends articulated by US national security strategy in the 1990s shifted almost immediately to emphasize the growing importance of the nonmilitary instruments of national power. Interagency planning and execution mechanisms in the NSC system as conceived in 1947, however, were insufficient to link those ends with interagency ways and means through integrated plans and budgets. Persistent disparities in personnel systems, planning and budgeting processes, cultural norms, and operational capabilities as well as a lack of clear authorities have conspired to make interagency unity of effort difficult to achieve. In addition, the "clean slate" flexibility of the National Security Council's structure, responsibilities, and authorities from president to president have made lasting links between ends, ways, and means unsustainable without further statutory reform. The NSCs of Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush each recognized the need for reforms in interagency planning and execution but considered congressional interference unnecessary.

Is Statutory Reform Necessary?

The National Security Councils of Presidents Clinton and Bush each attempted to reform interagency planning and execution from within by presidential directive. In 1997 President Clinton issued Presidential Decision Document (PDD)-56 aimed at reorganizing the NSC structure to better deal with complex contingencies such as Haiti and Somalia. At the time, the initiatives of PDD-56 were seen as a step in the right direction toward improving the interagency process. However credible and well-intentioned, PDD-56 could not break through disparities across agencies to improve the process of translating national security objectives to well-coordinated and interdependent tasks across the US government. As such, the initiatives of PDD-56 failed to achieve the intended improvements during the Clinton administration, and the directive was eventually superseded by a whole new structure once the Bush administration was sworn into office.

President Bush's first national security presidential directive reorganized the interagency coordination mechanisms inherited from the Clinton White House. The event-oriented interagency working groups established by PDD-56 were disbanded and replaced by regional and functional policy coordination committees. This new structure was well organized and offered important advantages in responding to global and regional national security issues. The *US Commission on National Security for the 21st Century* report, however, still concluded in 2000 that a major weakness of interagency national security planning persists. This weakness is the lack of attention paid to long-term planning.[1] Like the Clinton NSC initiative that preceded it, the Bush NSC's efforts to improve the performance of the 1947 National Security Council system failed to produce an interagency planning and execution system that drives unity of effort. This repeated inability to reform the system by presidential directive seems to be a strong indication that some form of statutory change is necessary.

Even so, national security experts such as John Deutch, Arnold Kanter, and Brent Scowcroft have repeatedly cautioned against dramatic statutory overhauls. They caution against a "wholesale overhaul" of the system yet acknowledge significant defects in the US national security structure and interagency process. Instead, they recommend delineating clear lines of responsibility in the interagency process, giving the NSC greater authority for

coordination of interagency programs and more efficiently aligning policy instruments to primary national security threats and objectives.[2]

Where We Are Today

Two key ingredients necessary to achieve unity of effort are unity of command and clear strategy-to-task links between ends, ways, and means. Some experts argue that unity of command is simply unachievable within the US system of checks and balances. The president, however, clearly enjoys considerable authorities, both express and implied, over national security issues. Article II of the US Constitution expressly designates the president as both the commander in chief of the armed forces and the chief diplomat of the United States. The president has also historically been afforded considerable latitude over economic and trade issues, particularly when connected to matters of national security. It is not at all clear that a president's unity of command over the instruments of national power is necessarily nullified, or even seriously impeded, by the express or implied authorities granted to either the Congress or the judiciary. Congress' unsuccessful attempt to force a reversal of unpopular national security policy in Iraq using its express "power of the purse" is just one recent example of how much practical latitude the president is afforded. It is much more likely that systemic unity of command deficiencies affecting the interagency process stem from the lack of clear statutory accountability between the president and the interagency processes at various levels within the NSC system. The customary practice of delegating presidential power by designating a "lead agency" to preside over various national security policy committees, for example, dilutes unity of command and subjects key interagency planning and execution questions to the potential for bureaucratic power plays between agencies. Once a clear connection is made to the president's existing constitutional authorities, however, it is unlikely that further statutory reform would be necessary to empower the president with effective unity of command over interagency planning and execution for national security.

Establishing clear strategy-to-task links between ends, ways, and means is a much more urgent and vexing problem that must be addressed to achieve a sustainable unity of effort. This idea is neither novel nor untested. It is, however, lost in a cacophony of prescriptions large and small. The current administration has undertaken a number of well-intentioned efforts attempting to address a variety of specific issues. The Department

of State's (DoS) new office to coordinate stability and reconstruction efforts, a new Civilian Reserve Corps, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and enhanced budget support for the secretary of state's "Transformational Diplomacy" initiatives are all examples of this. What has yet to be addressed, however, are the systemic and sustainable improvements to the process of translating national security strategy objectives to specific interagency roles, missions, and operations that can effectively integrate the instruments of national power and align national resources accordingly.

Emerging Schools of Thought: Ad Hoc Initiatives and Comprehensive Reform

Proposed reform solutions generally fall into two broad schools of thought: ad hoc initiatives and comprehensive government-wide reform. Numerous ad hoc initiatives proposed in recent years have merit but tend to be narrow in scope and largely reactive to negative trends in world events or shifts in public opinion. They often provide piecemeal corrective actions that, while they may be well-founded, address the results of interagency planning and execution breakdowns and not the underlying causes. In contrast, proposals for comprehensive reform contain a broad range of systemic reforms intended to address several perceived problems identified within the military and the broader national security community. While they typically consist of credible recommendations from top experts, they seem to ignore some practical barriers that make their wholesale implementation extremely unlikely without some extraordinary forcing function. Nevertheless, the compelling arguments made by these comprehensive reform proposals for replacing the National Security Act of 1947 leave little doubt that extensive reform is already overdue.

So why, in the aftermath of multiple well-documented interagency planning and execution failures, have comprehensive reforms not been enacted or even seriously debated? Whatever the answer may be, a new national security act is not a priority for the last year of the Bush administration, and it is unlikely to be a priority in the first year of the next administration. What can be learned from the ad hoc initiatives and comprehensive reform schools of thought to achieve the right balance? Examples from each school of thought will be analyzed further within the context of both the systemic problems that must be addressed and the barriers that have prevented reform in the recent past.

A Time for Action: Incremental Systemic Reform

With the country heavily invested in a long war with many fronts and America's century-long reputation for overcoming great challenges in the balance, now is clearly a time for action. Systemic statutory reform is long overdue, but a comprehensive national security act of 2010 is unlikely. The national security system needs practical yet statutory solutions to systemic problems; incremental steps within a larger framework of comprehensive reform over time.

The Department of Defense's (DoD) Joint Operations Planning and Execution System model of translating national security objectives down to specific fielded military capabilities and tasks is effectively accomplished through a deliberate planning process. Adapting this proven model to the interagency level would integrate and align the instruments of national power toward accomplishing US strategic objectives and would establish clear strategy-to-task links between ends, ways, and means. As President Eisenhower once observed, the process of planning is infinitely more important than the actual plans produced. However, the existence of specific interagency plans intended to achieve clearly established objectives in time would provide important information on capability gaps and overlaps that must be addressed across the interagency.

These identified shortfalls may require significant time, effort, resources, and maybe even subsequent legislation to overcome. Within the DoD, these capability gaps and overlaps inform the budgeting process that results in the six-year Future Years Defense Plan submitted to Congress every two years as a part of the president's budget submission. Although this DoD process is not immune to problems and politics, it does present a much more informed forecast of what is needed over time to achieve the military portions of the national security strategy. It also provides a much more transparent and rational baseline for Congress to exercise its appropriate oversight function on behalf of the American people. By contrast, the nonmilitary national security departments and agencies are only able to submit a budget one year at time with little or no connection to the objectives of national security strategy.

Effect of the Goldwater-Nichols Act on Enabling Unity of Effort

The coordination, unity of effort, and interoperability challenges now facing the interagency level of the US government are strikingly similar to those tackled with remarkable success by the military over the last 30–40

years. Prior to the defense reforms enacted by the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act, achieving unity of effort from the considerable air, land, and sea warfare capabilities of the military services was roughly analogous to a professional football team approaching the line of scrimmage after three separate huddles for the runners, passers, and blockers. There were, of course, credible ad hoc attempts to implement reform from within the DoD after the lessons of Vietnam. However, the failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran, the barracks bombing incident in Beirut, and the "patchwork" invasion of Grenada galvanized support for comprehensive statutory reform. According to James Locher III, a former Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) staffer, current director of the Project on National Security Reform, and a central figure in the buildup to passage of Goldwater-Nichols, the powerful service chiefs bitterly opposed statutory reform and jealously guarded service equities in operations planning and execution.[3] In a 1983 hearing before the SASC, former secretary of defense James Schlesinger characterized the intransigent and competitive service cultures resisting reform: "In all of our military institutions, the time-honored principle of 'unity of command' is inculcated. Yet at the national level it is firmly resisted and flagrantly violated. Unity of command is endorsed only if it applies at the service level. The inevitable consequence is both the duplication of effort and the ultimate ambiguity of command."[4]

Despite this initial resistance, Goldwater-Nichols reforms have been remarkably successful over time at maturing unity of effort between air, land, and sea power from simple coordination to synchronization, integration, and more recently, true interdependence. The extensive reforms spanned eight explicit objectives. In essence, however, the Goldwater-Nichols Act enabled unity of effort by:

1. Simplifying and reinforcing unity of command; and,
2. Assigning statutory responsibilities that, taken together, greatly enhance the strategy-to-task links between US National Security Strategy (ends), joint strategic and operational planning and execution (ways), and defense-wide requirements, programs, and budget (means).

The Goldwater-Nichols Act simplified and reinforced unity of command by, in effect, removing the service chiefs from the operational chain of command and reducing their direct access to the president and secretary of defense. The chain of command for joint operations was simplified to flow

from the president and secretary of defense directly to the applicable joint force combatant commander. In addition, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) became the sole and independent (no longer elected by the joint chiefs) military advisor to the president, the NSC, and the secretary of defense. The geographic and functional combatant commanders were also designated authorities commensurate with their responsibilities to carry out assigned missions and operations. The role of the service chiefs was thereby refocused on organizing, training, and equipping forces to be presented to combatant commanders in support of worldwide contingencies. This gave the war-fighting combatant commander unambiguous operational control over all assigned and attached air, land, and sea forces. Given the ambiguities of authority and command present before Goldwater-Nichols, this newly clarified unity of command was indeed essential, but not sufficient, to enable true unity of effort.

Fortunately the Goldwater-Nichols Act also established statutory responsibilities that enhance the strategy-to-task links between US National Security Strategy (ends), joint strategic and operational planning and execution (ways), and defense-wide requirements, programs, and budget (means). Perhaps the most important of these responsibilities was for the president to prepare and submit a formal report on national security strategy. The *President's National Security Strategy* (*NSS*) became the cornerstone of joint strategic and operational planning for the use of the military instrument of power. The Goldwater-Nichols Act charged the CJCS with formal oversight responsibilities for strategic direction; strategic planning; contingency planning and preparedness; advice on requirements, programs and budget; and joint doctrine, training, and education. As part of these responsibilities, the chairman was required to prepare fiscally constrained strategic plans. This statutory requirement resulted in the *Chairman's National Military Strategy* (*NMS*). The *NMS* was subsequently codified with a biennial review requirement by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 and outlined the chairman's vision to provide military capabilities necessitated by the *NSS*.[5] The act also required the secretary of defense to provide written contingency planning guidance to the CJCS containing planning priorities and baseline political assumptions.[6] The secretary's guidance was then passed down to the combatant commanders and service chiefs by the CJCS in a classified Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan along with the specific apportionment of forces to be considered available to the combatant commanders as they develop specific contingency plans.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act emphasis on unity of command over joint forces and establishment of a clear connection between strategic ends, ways, and means enabled the unity of effort that was clearly missing since before the Vietnam War. These reforms, at least in part, translated into unprecedented dominance of US combat forces in Panama, the Persian Gulf, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.[7] Although many challenges and imperfections persist in the planning and execution of joint military operations, it is difficult to ignore the increased effectiveness of America's combined air, land, and sea power when they approach the proverbial line of scrimmage from the same huddle. As this proven process is adapted for use at the interagency level, it is important to consider key benefits and potential liabilities.

Key Benefits and Potential Liabilities of Deliberate Planning

Implementing deliberate planning has some key benefits as well as potential liabilities that officials in the next administration should consider as the military process described above is adapted at the interagency level. To take full advantage of the benefits and avoid potential liabilities, interagency planning should not seek to replace functional planning activities within departments and agencies. Rather, the interagency planning process should be used to mobilize and integrate the specific capabilities of those departments and agencies to enhance their collective ability to achieve the objectives of national security strategy. Simply assigning a lead department or agency to address strategic policy objectives with no connection to specific interagency plans and resources to accomplish them is no longer sufficient. The key benefits of interagency deliberate planning include clear strategy-to-task links, integrated capabilities and competencies, early identification of risks and shortfalls, enhanced resource allocation, and eased transition to crisis action planning. Potential liabilities include time and resource intensity, perceived or actual inflexibility, political sensitivities, and cultural resistance.

Key Benefits at the Interagency Level

Clear strategy-to-task links. Strong strategy-to-task links impose discipline in both the implementation of national security strategy and, ironically, the strategy-making process itself. These links ensure that the many decentral-

ized tasks from all contributing efforts have a clear link back to the intended outcomes. They also force important practical considerations such as prioritization, task description and resource allocation, timing and tempo, and the evaluation of counteractions, branches, and sequels. A methodical approach to establishing clear strategy-to-task links is the first and best defense against unintended results and also serves to expose unrealistic or unattainable strategic objectives.

For example, the national security strategy has for many years included the objective of supporting the establishment of modern democratic governments. Depending upon how such an objective is operationalized, an interagency deliberate planning process would quickly reveal significant limitations in achieving that end state in certain regions within the means available to apply toward that objective. This, in turn, might drive a restatement of the objective itself or it could bring more restraint to administration rhetoric concerning that objective to manage expectations.

At the interagency level, it is likely that any given operation plan, whether it is shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East, counterproliferation in Central Asia, or disaster relief in East Asia, would include an overarching plan with supporting plans from multiple agencies. Even so, it is essential that all tasks in both the supported and supporting plans have a clear connection with a carefully documented end state approved by the president.

Integrated capabilities and competencies. If the progression of the military services from simultaneous operations toward true joint operations in the wake of the Goldwater-Nichols reforms is any indication, the interagency whole could also one day be greater than the sum of its parts. As interagency deliberate planning matures, it would begin to drive synergies among mutually supportive instruments of national power and greatly enhance America's ability to shape and respond effectively to world events. None of the objectives found in the *2006 National Security Strategy* can be achieved through the efforts of a single department or agency. There is perhaps no greater example of this than Operation Iraqi Freedom.

At the outset Operation Iraqi Freedom was, practically speaking, almost entirely a DoD task. Despite perhaps the most impressive invasion and occupation in military history, the military alone could not achieve the desired end state. Would Iraqi Freedom have been more effective or efficient if the joint operation plan were a supporting plan to a broader interagency plan to achieve the desired end state? That interagency plan may have been better still if it contemplated the potential to employ a variety of private as

well as public sector capabilities in addition to robust military security and stabilization operations. An effects-based interagency plan may well have integrated capabilities such as

- Multilateral economic aid, development, and humanitarian assistance,
- Targeted nongovernmental organization and intergovernmental organization support,
- Regional and sectarian diplomatic engagement,
- Omnibus support contracts requiring the employment of Iraqi nationals, and
- Targeted tax incentives for US corporate direct investment in Iraq.

It is impossible to know for sure if an interagency deliberate planning process would have achieved a superior result. What is certain, however, is that it would have forced planners to carefully consider how all the instruments of national power might be integrated and applied as necessary to achieve the desired end state. This process would have undoubtedly raised questions that were never addressed.

Early identification of risks and shortfalls. During the course-of-action development and analysis process, there are certain risks and shortfalls identified that either can or cannot be overcome or mitigated. Understanding these risks and shortfalls, both within individual plans and across interagency capabilities and competencies, before crisis situations develop can be an important advantage. Early analysis of risks and shortfalls empowers policy makers to make choices about whether to accept those risks as limiting factors, take alternative actions that avoid those risks, or acquire capabilities or competencies over time to remove those risks for the future.

One potential source of risk in interagency operations, for example, is that the NSC, the DoD, and the DoS do not have commonly defined geographical regions of the world. The combatant commanders have regional control while ambassadors under State almost exclusively represent the United States on a country-by-country basis. These differences could introduce risk by confusing authorities and coordination channels between the White House, the president's diplomatic representatives, and regional combatant commanders. Early identification of such risks and their potential impact upon desired end states gives the president the ability to address those risks as appropriate.

Enhanced resource allocation. Interagency deliberate planning would undoubtedly reveal capability gaps and overlaps within and between departments and agencies that must be addressed in future years' budgets. These investments and divestitures would, over time, ensure the best use of resources to achieve national strategic objectives. In addition, they would serve to build critical capabilities and competencies based upon well-understood shortfalls identified during the planning process. In the absence of this longer term perspective, neglected capabilities simply cannot be corrected by planning budgets one year at a time or even by simply doubling or tripling the budgets in one year for organizations that seem to be under resourced or are failing to achieve required results.

Eased transition to crisis action planning. The current NSC system already provides a tremendous crisis action response capacity to prepare coordinated options for presidential action. The existence of a robust deliberate planning process, however, provides for a much smoother transition into developing complete and executable interagency crisis response options. Although it is unlikely that a specific contingency plan would be executed without significant adaptation to the instant crisis, many of the execution details may still be valid, and the reasons why certain courses of action were either rejected or supported after significant analysis can be critical information to support better presidential decision making.

Potential Liabilities at the Interagency Level

Time and resource intensity. Deliberate planning is hard work. It takes dedicated participation from all planning stakeholders as part of a continuous cycle of developing and updating plans. Planning generally continues even during execution of a given plan in reaction to changing conditions. This presents a problem at the interagency level of how much actual planning can be credibly accomplished within an organization like the National Security Council without growing the staff to a degree that is more harmful than helpful. At the same time, however, if the interagency deliberate planning process is effectively "outsourced" by assigning lead departments for specific plans, then unity of command is diluted to a great extent. The challenge then in implementing interagency deliberate planning is to focus the White House staff level on overarching plans that integrate the instruments of national power toward specific end states to make clear connections from the National Security Strategy to the more detailed supporting plans of the departments and agencies.

Perceived or actual inflexibility. As with any complex process over time, interagency deliberate planning could become, or at least be perceived as, too inflexible to adapt to changing realities. Interagency plans could also serve to impede necessary flexibility within the various supporting departmental or agency plans if the process for updating those plans becomes overly burdensome. Even the perception of such inflexibility could jeopardize the credibility of the interagency planning process. This could lead decision makers to simply ignore the process and its products in favor of seemingly more responsive decision-making models. For this very reason, the DoD and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) have begun to reform the joint operation planning process to make it more adaptive and responsive to changing conditions.

Political sensitivities. The mere existence of specific plans, no matter how highly classified they might be, could result in domestic political exposure for the president and could complicate international diplomacy in certain situations. In domestic politics, the president could conceivably be significantly weakened, for example, by questions and recriminations related to the existence, content, or approval of certain plans. It is also possible that the existence of certain interagency plans could complicate the ability of US diplomats, who may have contributed to such plans, to negotiate or mediate effectively in delicate situations.

Cultural resistance. The deliberative process of achieving stated national security strategy objectives through unity of command and clearly established strategy-to-task links is likely to be countercultural for some departments and agencies. The DoS and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) are taking intentional steps to strengthen the links between diplomacy, foreign aid, and the president's National Security Strategy in their "Transformational Diplomacy and Development" strategic plan.[8] Even so, the typical rank-and-file USAID official, for example, still may reject the notion that foreign aid decisions should be based upon whether a clear connection can be made to a national security strategy document. In some cases, these workers have spent much more time deployed than either their Defense or State Department counterparts, and they undoubtedly have a keen understanding of the cultures and needs in different countries. The suggestion that they might achieve US objectives more effectively by taking a targeted and effects-based approach to foreign aid investments in concert with other economic, diplomatic, or military activities may well appear foolhardy or shortsighted to some.

Options and Barriers to Interagency Reform

For all the attention and resources devoted to proposals for interagency reform, few have overcome barriers to implementation (or enactment), and fewer still have addressed the systemic problems evidenced by several well-documented failures of interagency execution since the end of the Cold War. It is increasingly clear that to be enacted, effective and enduring interagency reforms considered by Congress and the next administration must meet certain criteria. They must be *pragmatic* enough to overcome significant barriers to enactment, *responsive* enough to address underlying problems, and *systemic* enough to drive fundamental change that enables interagency unity of effort. Considering the substantial barriers that have prevented reform of the national security system over the last two decades of the post–Cold War era, these criteria provide a meaningful basis upon which to analyze, compare, and contrast the various options to achieve meaningful national security reform in the near term.

After almost 20 years since the end of the Cold War, systemic national security reform is still nowhere on the national agenda. This remains true despite repeated failures in interagency planning and execution. While national security practitioners differ on the specifics according to their own experiences, four categories of barriers to meaningful reform are clearly apparent: environmental, political, cultural, and structural.

Environmental Barriers. The dynamic post–Cold War security environment itself presents a significant barrier to achieving interagency unity of effort in the implementation of national security strategy. Although several serious threats to America still exist, the post–Cold War security environment is mostly about opportunities and choices rather than the imperatives of countering concentrated existential threats. The threat of communism's spread during the Cold War, by contrast, was a coalescing force that preoccupied all the instruments of national power. Although no less complex, this concentration helped generate interagency unity of effort in much the same way that Adam Smith's "invisible hand" guides free markets. Containing the spread of communism was clearly the central objective, and the military was the primary instrument of power. Seven years after the end of the Cold War, the *National Security Strategy of 1996* called for global engagement and enlargement of freedom and democracy. A decade later, the *National Security Strategy of 2006* declared it "the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending

tyranny in our world."[9] The threats to national security in the post–Cold War era include transnational terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, rising global powers, global warming, energy dependence, and economic security, to name a few. Dealing with this complex variety of opportunities and threats requires a much more deliberate integration of the instruments of national power.

Political Barriers. Political barriers are also a significant challenge to national security reform. The political dimension of bureaucratic self-interest, the inertia of the status quo, and the risk of losing influence or budget authority naturally expose any significant reform idea to intense skepticism. This is particularly true if any "big idea" does not originate, or at least develop, from within the existing political order. Reorganizing the national security architecture through a comprehensive national security reform effort will undoubtedly lead to a significant redistribution of power, responsibilities, and authority in both the executive and legislative branches. In addition, the likely redistribution of resources between departments and agencies will generate winners and losers in a manner that is difficult to predict beforehand. Entrenched bureaucracies faced with losing oversight or fiscal authority over programs will almost certainly resist, as will some House and Senate authorizers and appropriators who perceive a threat to their positions or oversight jurisdictions. It is equally probable that any legislation affecting the NSC or the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is prone to be viewed as a usurpation of executive branch powers or an attack on the president's executive privilege. As formidable as the political barriers to reform may seem, they can and must be acknowledged and overcome for systemic reform efforts to succeed.

Executive and congressional commitment to reform is critical and was one of the key ingredients for the eventual success of Goldwater-Nichols. Championing such a complex and contentious reform agenda would require the expenditure of significant political capital. Unfortunately national security reform does not enjoy widespread demand from the majority of the US public, so the constituency and incentives for congressional or executive action are accordingly low. Consequently, successful reform will require strong leaders that are able to clearly articulate the problem, the proposed solutions, and the costs of inaction. Reform leaders must also translate the many public concerns over interagency performance in Afghanistan, Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, and the global war on terrorism into widespread support for reform. Only then can the already significant interest in national

security reform within academic circles, think tanks, and some top government officials be mobilized to generate the required momentum to overcome significant political barriers. Ignoring them is not feasible.

Cultural Barriers. Another key barrier to reform is organizational culture. While diversity of organizational culture between departments and agencies can be an asset, it can also breed parochialism, unhealthy competition, and a stovepiped approach to problem solving. The cultural barriers between government departments and agencies are very similar to those that existed between the military services within the DoD prior to the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986. The services conducted military operations with a service-centric mind-set and attempted to maximize their portion of the defense budget by expanding their core competencies or by attempting to marginalize the benefits of the other services' roles and missions. Each military service attempted to support national objectives within its own traditional war-fighting domain of air, land, or sea. Mission overlap and ill-defined core competencies, however, led to significant gaps and overlaps in capabilities and serious interoperability deficiencies.

Overcoming the entrenched cultural dimension of bureaucratic self-interest among the pre–Goldwater-Nichols military services required national attention and the sustained commitment of the legislative and executive branches. The gravity of the problem and the urgency for a solution became part of the national debate after a number of interoperability failures during military operations and the dramatic and embarrassing national failure to rescue American hostages in Iran. The ill-fated Desert One rescue operation ended in a disastrous crash that was traced to lack of interoperability, lack of joint training, and failures in command. The defense reform process that followed was long and arduous including nearly five years of debate and coordination before the act was even passed. Since then, more than 20 years of hard work have followed to make significant progress towards the desired end state.

Interagency reform will, without a doubt, face the same cultural challenges; however, they will likely be an order of magnitude more severe than what the DoD has experienced on its journey towards interdependence. Short of clear statutory mandates requiring change, it is not at all clear that the next three presidents will have any more success overcoming cultural barriers to interagency unity of effort than the last three. Recent failures in interagency planning and execution can become the catalysts for elevating systemic national security reform to a national debate. The

key issue is whether the need for reform can be turned into actual legislation and related policy directives that even opponents and critics at the highest levels in departments and agencies must support and implement or step aside.

Structural Barriers. The last category of barriers to systemic national security reform is organizational structures across the legislative and executive branches. This includes both the organizations themselves and the rules that govern them. There are at least three major structural obstacles that complicate meaningful reform. They include an insufficient NSC structure, stovepiped congressional oversight committees, and ineffective budget planning and execution.

The first, and perhaps most daunting, structural barrier is the National Security Council's limited capacity and ever-changing structure. The interagency centerpiece of the National Security Act of 1947, the NSC has proven to be nothing more and nothing less than the president's own staff, to be used or ignored at the pleasure of the president with all the executive privilege and protection from direct congressional oversight as is extended to the president himself. The NSC literally starts from scratch with the inauguration of each new president, and all of its previous directives or supporting structures are subject to replacement or inattention. Incremental steps towards enhancing interagency coordination through NSC organizational structures rarely survive the transition from one administration to the next. Some do not even survive the tenure of one administration. The constantly changing organizational structures of the national security coordinating mechanisms based on presidential preferences present a significant challenge to comprehensive and systemic national security reform. Overcoming this challenge through legislation is likely to be perceived as an effort to usurp presidential authority and prerogatives, which is certain to generate resistance.

Stovepiped congressional authorizations and appropriations committees are another structural barrier preventing reform. The Goldwater-Nichols reforms clearly belonged to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, whereas jurisdiction for comprehensive national security reform is likely to cross many committees within the House and the Senate. The potentially paralyzing effect that cross-cutting committee turf battles can have on interagency reform and subsequent oversight cannot be overstated. Overlapping committee jurisdiction is already a problem in some areas of oversight within the existing nonmilitary departments involved

in national security functions. An increased oversight focus toward interagency execution and resource management could exacerbate this structural problem.

Closely related to the lack of clear congressional oversight jurisdictions are ineffective budget planning and execution processes. With the exception of the DoD, there is currently little or no connection between the budgets of organizations involved in national security and the national security strategy they support. In fact, the nonmilitary budgets are planned one year at a time. This makes the rationale for budget initiatives, trends, and trade-offs for future capabilities difficult to explain or defend. Until very recently, only the budgets for defense and intelligence agencies were formally considered national security related. In addition, current laws and regulations make the movement of resources between national-security-related functions nearly impossible. This structural barrier serves to embolden departmental parochialism and reduces America's flexibility to react to changing world conditions to an unacceptable level. In addition, it results in the instrument of power used to achieve a given effect to be determined by which department or agency has the resources rather than which instrument of power is appropriate to achieve the desired effects. Although congressional oversight is still essential, this barrier must be overcome for systemic national security reforms to succeed.

Examination of Comprehensive Reform Proposals

Major universities and Washington-based think tanks have, in recent years, expended an enormous amount of effort and resources to develop proposals for comprehensive defense and national security reform. As discussed earlier, advocates point out that today's national security landscape is significantly different than the environment faced by the nation in 1947. Proponents of comprehensive reform highlight the need for a new national security architecture that is designed to meet current and future challenges more effectively and with an interagency approach using all the instruments of power.[10]

No matter how logical and complete such reform proposals may be, however, they must be sufficiently *pragmatic* to overcome the barriers discussed above, *responsive* to the problems preventing unity of effort toward national objectives, and *systemic* in nature to drive fundamental change within and between departments and agencies. How likely is it that the

leading proposals for comprehensive reform will be enacted, effective, and enduring? Two such efforts warrant close consideration: "Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: US Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era" and the "Project on National Security Reform."

Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: US Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) undertook a massive multiple-phase study in 2003 called *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: US Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era*. The CSIS study addressed persistent deficiencies within the DoD, proposed improvements in interagency and coalition operations, and offered perspectives on the future of guard and reserve functions. It relied heavily on the experiences of an impressive array of former defense and national security officials. It also had a clear intent to be pragmatic and measured in its approach to avoid change for the sake of change and reduce the risk of unintended consequences.

Even so, the numerous and thoughtful recommendations, taken together, would represent nothing less than a "stem-to-stern" overhaul of the DoD, the NSC, and various key processes to include budgeting, acquisition, personnel management, training, and education. Although the report acknowledged the need for some of the recommendations to be implemented by statute, it seemed to favor implementation by a series of national security presidential directives and cabinet-level reform initiatives that did not require congressional action.

Project on National Security Reform

Another credible and comprehensive reform initiative currently underway is the Project on National Security Reform sponsored by The Center for the Study of the Presidency. The objective of the project is to improve the US government's ability to effectively provide for the nation's security in the twenty-first century through comprehensive reform of statutory, regulatory, and congressional oversight authorities that govern the interagency system. In contrast with the CSIS report, the Project for National Security Reform study acknowledges up front that the centerpiece of implementation must be a new national security act. Consequently, the project aims to produce recommendations for updating the 1947 act, to propose required supporting presidential directives, and to outline new congressional committee structures required to facilitate the desired outcomes.[11]

The key question is whether either of the two comprehensive reform proposals discussed above will be *pragmatic*, *responsive*, and *systemic* enough to be implemented and put America on the path toward unity of effort in the pursuit of national security objectives. Right away there is little doubt that both of the reform proposals described above are responsive and systemic. Whether either proposal is pragmatic enough to overcome barriers to wholesale implementation is another question entirely. Despite clear efforts within both proposals to reduce likely sources of opposition, the sheer depth and breadth of the various reforms proposed could make the barriers that have prevented real reform for the last two decades insurmountable. Since it is clear that comprehensive reform is necessary, there is good reason to hope that one of these proposals will indeed be implemented within the next year in its entirety despite the ever-present risk of unintended consequences. It may even be worth the risks resulting from the administrative distractions it would undoubtedly create across the national security community while the country is at war. It took close to five years of debate to enact the Goldwater-Nichols legislation and over 20 years and counting to fully realize its intended outcomes. With national security reform lost in a cacophony of reelection-year politics, comprehensive reform may not be feasible in the near term.

Examination of Ad Hoc Initiatives

A growing number of reform proposals recommend various ad hoc prescriptions as the keys to progress. Some advocate more engaged and thoughtful leadership-driven initiatives to include national security education and training as the key to interagency cooperation. Other studies propose transformations in organizational culture through better communication and information sharing as the central keys towards improving the interagency process. Still others point to fixing the long-antiquated budget development process and the ineffective allocation of resources across government agencies as the cornerstone to real reform. Several internal reform initiatives undertaken by the president and the Congress appear to be reactions to very specific issues that have arisen as a result of poor interagency cooperation in the past. Clearly, not all ad hoc initiatives fit neatly within one of the broad themes described above. Examining the broad range of ad hoc initiatives by these major themes, however, is a useful construct to evaluate a variety of credible ideas to determine whether

they are *pragmatic*, *responsive*, and *systemic* enough to produce interagency unity of effort in the post–Cold War security environment.

Leadership-Based Initiatives

Some argue that the key to improving interagency execution is more-engaged and decisive leadership from the president specifically and the executive branch in general. To be sure, strong and engaged leadership is necessary for the success of any large organization. In *Harnessing the Interagency for Complex Operations*, three Washington scholars cite unclear relationships among top-level interagency officials and undefined spans of control and authority as the key impediments to interagency execution.[12] Although no such confusion exists with respect to the president's authority, the practical ability of the president to influence individual departments and agencies is sometimes overestimated. There is a theoretical argument to be made, however, that leadership-based reform initiatives could be responsive to the problems preventing interagency unity of effort if the right leader is elected. The president has complete control over the structure and functions of the NSC and, in theory, could direct a number of organizational, procedural, and budgetary reforms across and within the federal bureaucracy through a series of presidential directives. Ironically, the plausibility of this argument may be precisely why the last three presidents have attempted in vain to resolve interagency coordination problems without statutory interference.

However responsive leadership-based initiatives could be, they are neither pragmatic enough to overcome the barriers discussed nor are they systemic enough to drive enduring reform.[13] As powerful as the presidency may be, significant political, cultural, and structural barriers render purely leadership-driven reform unrealistic without a legal mandate. This is especially true within a bureaucracy where many of its authorities and responsibilities, not to mention funding, are established by laws not easily circumnavigated by presidential fiat. For much the same reason, purely leadership-driven reform initiatives are, with rare exceptions, not systemic enough to endure beyond one presidency. In their book, *Keeping the Edge: Managing Defense for the Future*, former top defense officials Ashton Carter and John White underscore this point in their argument that the lack of formal organizational structures and coordination procedures cannot be overcome through leadership alone.[14] Closely related to leadership-based reform initiatives are those that call for changes in organizational culture.

Culture-Based Initiatives

Some scholars and practitioners argue that poor interagency execution can be overcome by changing organizational cultures that discourage coordination and interdependence. An International Affairs Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, Maj Sunil B. Desai, USMC, concludes that while most of the tools for cooperation exist, the essence of the problem is that the interagency community is dominated by individual cultures rather than by a common interagency culture.[15] Unhealthy interagency competition and a tendency to retain, and even build, seemingly redundant capabilities between departments are the results of culturally motivated bureaucratic self-interest, and they underscore the need for unity of command. They are also primary reasons that the practice of appointing "lead agencies" to oversee interagency issues does not work. Even experts who believe statutory reform is necessary concede that disparate cultures between departments and agencies represent a significant barrier to interagency reform. Assuming the relevant organizational cultures can be changed to foster a single interagency culture, would such changes be *pragmatic*, *responsive*, and *systemic* enough to drive interagency unity of effort?

In the absence of a clear, unassailable mandate driving systemic changes to interagency processes and structures, it is not clear that attempts to change organizational culture alone would rise to any of the criteria required to make lasting progress. Organizational cultures are not developed quickly or changed easily. They typically affect every aspect of an organization, from training and communication to promotion and compensation. While conflicting interagency cultures are undoubtedly a source of unhealthy competition that must be addressed, they are also a source of organizational identity and pride that must be approached with caution. Transforming the DoD culture from "service operations–centric" to "joint operations–centric," for example, required an overriding statutory mandate, talented and persistent leadership, regulatory and personnel system changes, and a significant amount of time. Any credible attempt to replace the individual cultures of departments and agencies involved in national security with a common interagency culture must be preceded by a mandate that directly or indirectly necessitates the change. This provides an important impetus that all organization members can understand and support. Attempts at significant cultural change in the absence of a clear external forcing function could unwittingly become a large difficult step

in the wrong direction. Perhaps a less risky set of ad hoc initiatives, albeit no less difficult or emotional, can be found in budget-based initiatives.

Budget-Based Initiatives

Budget reform is an increasingly common theme in prescriptions for improved interagency execution that merits very careful consideration. Some experts cite large interagency budget imbalances as the key factor while others point to the antiquated budget process itself. Proponents of resolving budget imbalances point out extreme limitations in civilian operational capacity and the dangers associated with a military-centric foreign policy. Critics of an outdated budget process point out that the current system lacks a rational basis of tying resource allocation decisions to national security strategy objectives. The US Commission on National Security for the 21st Century, for example, pointed out that the budget process needs to be revamped since there is no single process or document that links the national security strategy to executive branch resource allocation.[16] In fact, critics of the budget process suggest that national security budget priorities are inherently suboptimized when developed independently by departments and agencies without considering interagency trade-offs, gaps, and overlaps. Perhaps the critical missing link is that interagency budget development and execution processes are not guided by an integrated strategic planning process.[17]

Do Budget Imbalances Put a Military Face on all US Instruments of Power? What, if anything, do the stark budgetary disparities between military and nonmilitary functions say about our strategy for achieving national security objectives? A wise pastor once challenged his church by saying, "Don't tell me you love God with all your heart. Let me see your checkbook, and I'll tell you where your heart lies." Ironically, it was the secretary of defense that made a passionate plea in testimony on Capitol Hill for an increase in the State Department's budget, noting that State's total budget of $34 billion is less than what the DoD spends on health care alone. He highlighted the dramatic resource disparity between the military and nonmilitary agencies as a significant barrier in dealing with the post–Cold War security environment.[18] An American Forces Press Service article, "Increased Interagency Cooperation Vital in the Global War on Terrorism," highlights the budget-driven lack of a credible civilian surge capacity as the critical shortfall prevented meaningful cooperation.[19] These and other credible studies in the literature specifically contend that

civilian agencies like the DoS lack sufficient resources and personnel to execute critical roles in achieving national security objectives.[20]

Significant gaps in civilian department and agency capabilities to effectively shape and respond to global events are often highlighted as a reason that the military instrument of power is too often the tool of choice. At first glance, this mismatch seems to be evident in Iraq and Afghanistan where the building of roads and schools is often overseen by US battalion commanders wearing body armor and helmets instead of engineers wearing jeans and hard hats. Commanders in Afghanistan have become more interested in deployed National Guard members' agricultural prowess than their combat readiness. These points certainly make a compelling prima facie argument for moving funds and personnel from the DoD into civilian agencies. Is the solution really that simple?

Why Is Any Budget Too Much or Too Little? What should drive budget reforms intended to resolve apparent budget imbalances? There is little doubt that the resource allocation mechanisms must be reformed. Certainly a global military capability is a much more expensive proposition than global diplomatic engagement or even global economic aid and development assistance. Why is any budget too much or too little? All too often the solution chosen in these situations is to radically increase funding in a given year for a seemingly under resourced or ineffective function. Sometimes this occurs without a clear idea of the desired outcomes of the increased spending or any indication of whether the new funding levels will be sustained in future budgets. This, in turn, limits the choices on what can be done with the increased funding. The return on these kinds of investments may be quite limited.

Another common solution is to reduce the overall military budget, increase seemingly under-funded civilian departments, and let the winners and losers sort out the best ways to allocate the respective gains and losses. Since the budgets are typically developed one to two years prior to enactment, there is little chance of understanding the consequences of such a trade-off decision until it is too late. Returning to the earlier example, what if the funding for the battalion overseeing reconstruction in Iraq was diverted to a civilian agency two years prior to perform the same function within the context of development assistance? What are the consequences when the civilian, or surrogate contractors, cannot or will not oversee construction while insurgent threats to security persist? What then is the correct allocation of resources between military capabilities across the

spectrum of conflict to include civil-military affairs specialists and civilian agency reconstruction experts trained to provide economic development assistance in purely permissive environments?

Budget-based reform initiatives, even in the absence of traceable systemic links to the objectives of national security strategy, may well be pragmatic enough to overcome barriers to implementation. They may even be partially responsive to interagency problems associated with the underfunding of civilian department and agency capabilities. They are not, however, systemic enough to drive enduring reform and unity of effort without a robust interagency deliberate planning process that informs budget trade-offs across the interagency and connects the ends, ways and means of national security. In essence, the gains would likely be greater efficiency and transparency of the budget process rather than gains in effectiveness of the integrated capabilities funded by the resulting budgets.

Issues-Based Initiatives

The last major theme of ad hoc initiatives involves those that the president and Congress implement to correct specific issues resulting from poor interagency cooperation in the past. While it may be too early to judge the success of each reform, initiatives such as the National Counterterrorism Center, the Stabilization and Reconstruction Civilian Management Act, and the DoD Joint Interagency Coordination Group are clearly intended to improve the interagency process for specific priorities like counterterrorism, stability and reconstruction operations, and joint military operations. Organized under the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the National Counterterrorism Center may well become a model for future reforms involving regional or functional interagency teams. If it is ever appropriately resourced, the Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction and the National Civilian Reserve Corps, established by the same legislation, could grow into significant civilian operational capabilities, although it is unclear how the unsuccessful model of "lead agency," raised to a statutory level by assigning these interagency functions to the DoS, will overcome unity of command problems that will undoubtedly arise if they have not already.

Issues-based initiatives of the president and Congress have proven to be *pragmatic* enough for enactment and may contain important seeds for future reform efforts. They are, however, only *responsive* to a narrow subset of interagency problems based upon the specific issue involved, and they are clearly not *systemic*.

Why Deliberate Planning?

So what makes interagency deliberate planning the first and most critical step to enable incremental systemic reform of national security planning and execution mechanisms? The answer is found not only in the practicality of applying a proven process that led to unity of effort across the military services but also in the outcomes of the deliberate planning process that are necessary to inform operational and resource allocation decisions within and between departments and agencies.

The proposition that the statutory implementation of interagency deliberate planning become the foundational step toward incremental national security reform may well be unique. The idea, however, that a fiscally constrained planning link is necessary to connect the objectives of national security ends with the operational ways and budgetary means of individual departments and agencies is widely recognized. Several national security reform proposals identify interagency strategic planning as a key shortfall.[21] CSIS researchers Michèle Flournoy and Shawn Brimley complain that some 15 years after the conclusion of the Cold War, the US government had yet to adopt a strategic planning mechanism for foreign or domestic policy.[22] Interagency deliberate planning is *pragmatic* enough, if sponsored by skilled and respected reform leaders, to overcome barriers to enactment, it is *responsive* to the problems preventing interagency unity of effort, and it is *systemic* enough to drive enduring reform.

We Have Been Here Before

The Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reform Act passed in 1986 was aimed at solving very similar problems within the Department of Defense. At the time, the DoD lacked unity of effort due to unclear command relationships and a lack of strategy-to-task links between ends, ways, and means. The four services operated in stovepipes with very little joint coordination; each fending for its own programs and initiatives. Roles, missions, and force structure were primarily determined based on service-centric preferences. Individual service planning and budgeting efforts led to significant mission overlap and very little coordination between the services. The Goldwater-Nichols legislation has been extremely effective in driving the services to support joint deliberate planning and execution mechanisms that establish strong strategy-to-task links between ends, ways, and means. Unity of effort has been the result, and the US armed forces have become the most formidable fighting force the world has ever known.

America Cannot Afford Objectives it Cannot Afford

Deliberate planning is a proven and effective process of establishing strategy-to-task links between military ends, ways, and means. At the interagency level, the same methodical approach to planning would drive a disciplined decision-making process that forces the consideration of end states, desired and undesired effects, appropriate integration of the instruments of national power, and the specific capabilities and resources required. Deliberate planning at the interagency level could prevent the fruitless pursuit of objectives for which the United States is either unwilling or unable to apply the necessary means. This discipline could also result in more realistic and achievable national security strategies and the many benefits that come from a renewed clarity of intent communicated to America's friends and adversaries alike.

Table 1 – Reform Options Assessment Matrix

	Pragmatic			Responsive				Systemic
	Political Barriers	Cultural Barriers	Structural Barriers	Unity Of Effort	Unity Of Command	Strategy-To-Task Links	Fiscally Constrained	Enduring
Comprehensive Reform								
PNSR	–	–	–	+	+	+	+	+
BGWN	–	–	–	+	+/–	+	+	+
Ad-Hoc Initiatives								
Leadership Based	+/–	+/–	–	–	+	–	+	–
Cultural Based	–	+/–	+/–	–	–	–	–	–
Budget Based	–	+/–	+/–	+/–	–	+/–	+	–
Issue Based	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–
Incremental Systemic Reform								
Interagency Deliberate Planning step-1	+/–	+/–	+/–	+	+	+	+	+

The Road Ahead

The US Government has come to a crossroads. For the first time since the National Security Act of 1947, the "how" of national security has become a more pressing concern than the "what." On a cold day in January 2009, a small group of brilliant people will leave the Inauguration

Day festivities and enter the Old Executive Office Building for their first day of work. As they climb the majestic spiral staircase and enter their respective offices at the NSC, they will marvel at how thorough their predecessors were at disposing of every last piece of paper. No evidence of a nation at war will be found at the epicenter of interagency coordination. In time they will send the next president a new National Security Strategy of the United States. It will have many similarities and some important differences from those of the last three post–Cold War presidents. Many of the members of this small staff will see that moment as the end of an important statutory process to determine what America will do to make the nation and the world more secure. As the signed document makes its way to Capitol Hill and is uploaded to the public White House Web site, only a handful may really ponder how it will get done.

Will post–Cold War national security planning and execution continue to be largely the simultaneous pursuits of individual departments and agencies into the next administration? The answer may be determined by whether the new White House and Congress recognize the need to address the question of how, in addition to what, national security objectives will be planned and executed. Interest in national security reform is rising rapidly as a result of the public debate and the dissatisfaction with interagency outcomes. The walls of bureaucratic self-interest are weakening as the secretary of defense and the flag officers he leads repeatedly challenge Congress to support greater resources for the Department of State and other civilian national security organizations.[23] The presidential elections in November 2008 will provide a unique opportunity for action. New administrations are not politically or rhetorically anchored to the processes and policies they inherit. Consequently, they typically have increased latitude to address systemic problems. They are also more willing to spend the political capital required to overcome barriers and resistance when they perceive the new president's agenda may be at stake. The trap set for them by the current "clean slate" national security system is the belief that the new agenda will be compelling enough to overcome any systemic process weaknesses that can be addressed at a later time.[24] This dogmatic cycle can be broken despite significant barriers and the many competing domestic and international priorities, but the time to act is now.

This section outlines a framework for near-term actions as necessary to implement interagency deliberate planning within the current national security system in a practical yet sustainable manner. It also examines the expected outputs of the interagency deliberate planning process that en-

able fact-based decision making for further incremental national security reform as appropriate. If these recommendations are acted upon, 2009 will be the last presidential transition in which America's interagency national security planning and execution process will start over.

Near-term actions to implement interagency deliberate planning are necessary to benefit from the political timing of a new administration and the subsequent reevaluation of national security strategy objectives. With a clear focus on the desired end state and the equivalent of a "commander's intent," the key tasks are described below for both congressional and presidential action as necessary to implement interagency deliberate planning in a manner that is pragmatic, responsive, and systemic. These tasks are not meant to be exhaustive, but they do describe a framework that may be necessary to achieve the desired end state. An interagency planning and execution process marked by unity of effort through indelible links between ends, ways, and means as well as clarified command relationships, appropriately prioritized budgets, and strong congressional oversight.

Within the symbolic first 100 days of the next administration, the president, after close consultation with key House and Senate leaders and the Congressional Caucus on National Security Reform, should forward to the Congress a legislative proposal to establish a new and permanent Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate within the National Security Council. Unlike the existing structure of the NSC, which would continue to operate under executive privilege, the new directorate would be subject to congressional oversight. Congress should establish a Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Planning and Policy to lead the new directorate. This individual would also serve as the Deputy Director for National Security in the Office of Management and Budget, to be appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate, with statutory authorities, responsibilities, and reporting requirements. The president should issue directives as may be required to enable or facilitate the planning, policy, and budget responsibilities of the new position.

The actions outlined below provide further clarification of the key tasks that should be implemented in the near term to achieve the desired end state without being overly prescriptive. Implementation details should be left up to the respective branches of government as much as possible, yet with an uncompromising focus on the specific outcomes to be achieved. The key task descriptions are divided into two categories, those that primarily

require congressional action (the main effort) and others that require action on the part of the executive branch (the enablers).

Congressional Actions

The political, cultural, and structural barriers to reform cannot be overcome without legislation as the cornerstone forcing function. National War College scholars Martin Gorman and Alexander Grongrad conclude that nothing short of a legislative mandate will solve the current problems of the interagency national security system.[25] The legislative process is also critical to achieve the level of government-wide participation and commitment required for the reforms to endure over time. This section outlines seven key elements of an interagency reform statute that will be required to begin the process of incremental systemic reform as proposed:

1. Establish an Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate within the NSC,
2. Assign oversight of the directorate to a Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Planning and Policy, who also serves as the Deputy Director for National Security in the OMB and is subject to the advice and consent of the Senate,
3. Mandate an annual National Security Implementation Plan to be submitted with the president's budget submission to Congress,
4. Change the *NSS* submission requirement from annual to quadrennial,
5. Authorize, fund, and oversee an interagency roles and missions commission,
6. Require the president, with the advice of the Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Planning and Policy, to issue national security planning guidance every two years to departments and agencies as necessary to establish direct links to interagency plans consistent with the *NSS*, and
7. Establish a legal mechanism to facilitate the reprogramming of national security funds across departments and agencies within the execution year subject to responsive congressional notification and approval procedures.

Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate. Congress should issue legislation that directs the establishment of an Interagency Planning and

Policy Directorate at the NSC level that is solely focused on interagency deliberate planning. Crisis action response and current operations would continue to be the focus of the current NSC structure. Unlike the organizations within the current National Security Council, the new directorate would focus on establishing clear strategy-to-task links between the ends, ways, and means of national security strategy. The "ends" are the objectives outlined within the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, which would become the responsibility of the new directorate to establish and assess. The "ways" would be established through interagency regional and functional plans generated by this new directorate through the deliberate planning process in concert with the various supporting plans generated within the departments and agencies as appropriate to establish clear strategy-to-task links. The "means" would be established through a six-year Future Years National Security Plan, to be updated on a two-year cycle.

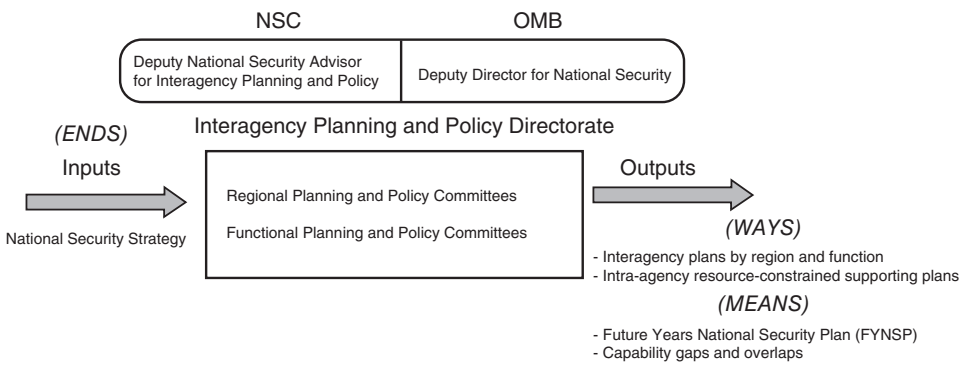

Figure 1. Connecting the ends, ways, and means of national security

The Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate should be a part of the overall NSC organization, yet it should have continuity and congressional oversight characteristics similar to those of the departments and agencies. To enable this hybrid identity, the staffing of the new directorate should be roughly one-fourth political appointees and three-fourths career civil servants. In addition, the plans, products, and records of the Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate must be maintained without regard to changing administrations. While this may require an amendment to the Presidential Records Act and is likely to be seen by some as an incursion on presidential power, it is critical to the efficacy of the interagency planning and execution process and its ability to drive systemic change.

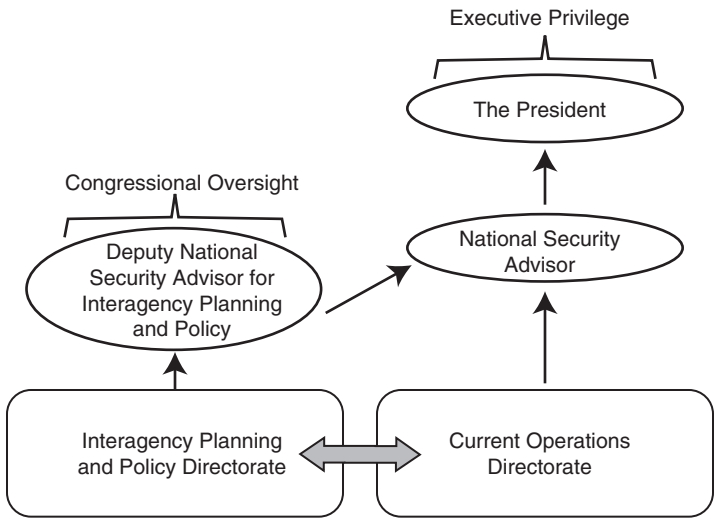

Figure 2. Proposed structure of the National Security Council staff

In his article, "Rethinking the Interagency System," former NSC deputy executive secretary Michael Donley assessed the interagency mechanisms within the current NSC, noting, "It is clear that the statutory framework for the National Security Council and presidential directives describing the National Security Council System may no longer reflect the scope of activities now occurring in the interagency space above the level of individual departments and agencies, or across agencies below the policy making level."[26]

The new directorate for planning and policy outlined above will bring greater clarity to both the new and old functions of the NSC system. This directly addresses the observation highlighted by Secretary Donley and echoed by other national security practitioners and think tank studies.

Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Planning and Policy. As mentioned previously, Congress should issue legislation that establishes a deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy to oversee the Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate. This position should also be dual hatted as the deputy director for national security in the Office of the Management and Budget to advise and oversee presidential decisions related to the Future Years National Security Plan budget and execution year reprogramming decisions. The individual nominated by the president would be subject to confirmation by the Senate, yet would report directly to the national security advisor and must

serve as the president's principal advisor for interagency planning and policy matters. The specific responsibilities of the deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy are outlined in figure 3.

- Oversight of the Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate
- President's director of national security interagency planning
- Resource-constrained National Security Implementation Plan
- Oversees regional and functional supporting plans as directed by the president
- Appointment of interagency capabilities
- Dual role: deputy director for national security, Office of Management and Budget
- Future Years National Security Plan
- Oversees and assesses the National Security Unfunded Priority List

Figure 3. Responsibilities of the deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy

National Security Implementation Plan. The implementing legislation must require the Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate to produce a National Security Implementation Plan, with classified annexes as required, on an annual basis to be delivered to the Congress with the president's budget submission. The plan should summarize interagency regional and functional plans implementing the National Security Strategy. It should also include specifics on what capabilities are required (by department and agency) within the Future Years National Security Plan to achieve the stated objectives, clear assignments of roles and missions, and an assessment of major risks to interagency execution implied by the trade-offs within the president's budget.

Quadrennial Updates of the National Security Strategy. Congress should also consider adjusting the requirement to deliver a National Security Strategy every year to every four years. The NSS has not, does not, and should not change every year. NSS objectives must serve as a foundational, long-term baseline for interagency deliberate planning. Formal statutory clarification on the time horizon of the NSS adds important context to its objectives and provides for more effective interagency planning and budgeting.

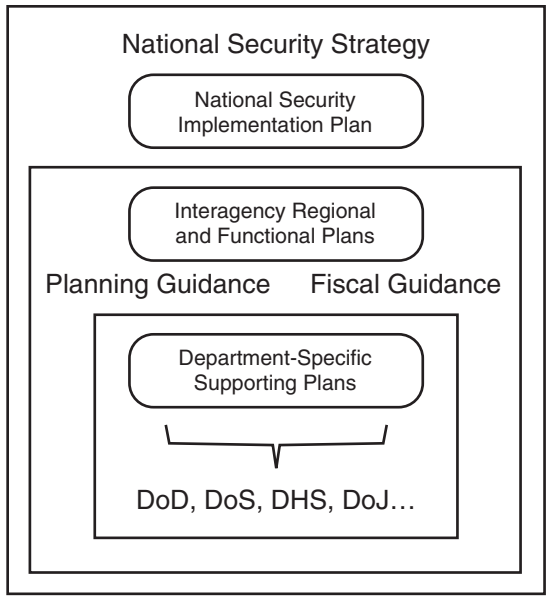

Figure 4. Establishing strategy-to-task links

Interagency Roles and Missions Assessment. An initial interagency roles and missions assessment conducted by a nonpartisan commission or federally funded research and development center with periodic updates thereafter as required should be authorized and overseen by the Congress. A roles and missions assessment is critical for establishing an interagency capabilities baseline for planning to be updated and refined as the national security objectives change and the global security environment evolves. Additionally, this assessment is necessary to identify unnecessarily redundant capabilities; clarify investment, personnel, and recapitalization decisions; and set the conditions for future interdependence.

Requirement for Presidential National Security Planning Guidance. Legislation implementing interagency deliberate planning should also require the president to issue biannual national security planning guidance to the applicable departments and agencies. As a practical matter, this guidance is necessary to ensure the planning processes of all national security functions within the departments and agencies are properly aligned with regional and functional interagency planning. The rationale for inclusion of such a requirement in statute, however, is to institutionalize the accountability and singular unity of command vested in the president. The law must make clear that formal direction regarding national security

planning and execution must come from the president except as provided by the US Constitution itself. The delegation of such powers to lead departments and agencies or to appointed "czars" dilutes this crucial element required to achieve interagency unity of effort.

Legal Mechanisms for National Security Budget Reprogramming. The ability to reprogram resources across national security departments and agencies, and by extension, between the instruments of national power within the execution year to react to unforeseen requirements is absolutely critical. Budgets are often originated by departments and agencies up to two years prior to the year that budget will be executed. In addition, moving funds between the DoD, the DoS, and the USAID is not practical within the current legal environment. In a dynamic post–Cold War security environment in which nonstate actors with extensive and flexible resources constitute a significant threat, American national security functions must have as much resource flexibility as possible to seize opportunities and counter threats as they emerge. Although congressional notification or even approval is completely appropriate, there must be sweeping and flexible legal mechanisms established to enable the execution year movement of funds at least within and across the national security budget accounts. The absence of these mechanisms produces poor interagency cooperation and a tendency to use the wrong mix of capabilities based upon budget trade-off decisions made more than a year in advance.

Presidential Actions

In addition to congressional actions, four presidential actions as a minimum may well be necessary to create the conditions for success even with legislation:

1. Direct the structure and staffing of the Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate,
2. Nominate a deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy to also serve as the deputy director for national security within the OMB,
3. Direct the OMB to establish a unique coding system to all national security functions and organizations within the president's budget; and

4. Direct all government departments and agencies to reorganize as required to conform to a common organizing construct for global geographic regions.

Direction Regarding the Structure of the Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate. The president should direct the national security advisor to stand up a National Security Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate headed by the deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy to be formalized by a National Security Presidential Directive or the equivalent. The presidential directive should clearly establish:

- The authorities and responsibilities of the deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy,
- The authorities and responsibilities of the deputy director for national security within the OMB,
- The structure and staffing requirements of the NSC's Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate,
- Other direction as deemed appropriate by the president to potentially include target dates for initial and full operational capability of the new directorate, description of the interagency planning system and products, and so forth.

Upon establishing the structure and staffing policies for the new directorate, the president should eliminate overlapping responsibilities between the new directorate and the preexisting NSC staff organization. Although a common organizing construct with regional and functional teams is advisable, the preexisting NSC staff should focus on current operations and crisis response while the new directorate takes over interagency planning and policy functions not related to crisis action response. Also, the new directorate should be staffed by one-quarter political appointees and three-quarters civil servants hired through a competitive selection process from the departments and agencies for rotational assignments. Clear career advancement incentives must be established to attract the best staff possible and to ensure that future senior national security civil servants and general officers have interagency experience.

The task of interagency deliberate planning should not be added to the responsibilities of the existing NSC organizations for several reasons. The

current structure and staffing levels are often strained to keep up with the workload of reacting to unforeseen crises and challenges, and expanding the staff to accommodate the additional planning requirements would dilute its current strengths.[27] The NSC is an advisory body to the president. The need for its current operations and crisis action response staff to be flexible and subject to frequent changes to suit the leadership style of the president cannot be overstated. Furthermore, attempting to subject the current NSC to congressional oversight and testimony would detract from its primary role as an advisory body to the president.

Nomination of a Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Planning and Policy. The president should nominate a deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy to the Senate for confirmation. This Senate-confirmed position should also serve as the deputy director for national security within the OMB. The rationale for this "marriage" of policy and funding is to provide authority commensurate with the responsibilities of the new deputy national security advisor for interagency planning and policy. This will likely be a controversial role that will face initial resistance from departments and agencies that currently "own" their budgets without direct oversight or interference from the White House staff. Giving the new directorate specified budgetary oversight authorities within the Future Years National Security Plan is an essential element of the new directorate to drive systemic changes not only to the interagency structures of the NSC but also within and between national security departments and agencies. This must start by effectively "fencing" the national security budget to set it apart from other governmental functions.

Transparent National Security Budget. To that end, the president should direct the OMB to establish a national security budget coding system that will uniquely identify funds allocated to national security organizations and functions. This system will allow Congress and the executive branch to have a much clearer picture of the total resources dedicated to national security initiatives across all government agencies. The increased visibility is critical to tying resource allocations across government agencies to the objectives and priorities of the national security strategy. The higher priority status given to national security funding initiatives will allow smaller departments with national security functions to compete on a level playing field in zero-sum budget battles.

Common Definition of Geographic Regions. Finally, the president should direct all government departments and agencies to reorganize as

required to conform to a common organizing construct for global geographic regions. The current mismatch in regional definitions between the DoD, the DoS, the USAID, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) results in a significant breakdown in regional coordination efforts. Common regional definitions across government agencies are an important step in facilitating an effective interagency deliberate planning process. President Nixon directed a similar effort across state agencies to provide a standard approach to interstate and national programs. The initiative proved to be effective in improving the overall coordination and implementation of federal as well as local programs. For interagency planning and execution to be effective, US national security officials at all levels need the same enhanced clarity in international settings.

Presidential commitment to national security reform is absolutely critical. Successful implementation of incremental reform initiatives aimed at improving the process of interagency planning and execution will require the unwavering commitment and resolve of the president, the Congress, and the American people.

Looking Toward the Future with a Sharper Eye

The ways and means outputs of the strategy-to-task links established through the interagency deliberate planning process can actually facilitate future national security reform. Many of the barriers preventing comprehensive reform are buttressed by underlying concerns over unintended consequences, expensive missteps, and the dangers associated with parallel system-wide change. Advocates of comprehensive national security reform may argue that the difficulties of maintaining political focus on any one issue realistically preclude more than one opportunity for statutory reform. The outputs of interagency deliberate planning, however, may remove significant underlying concerns that would otherwise prevent further reform. The outputs that connect the ends of National Security Strategy with the ways and means necessary include

Ways:

- Fiscally constrained interagency plans linking National Security Strategy to the integrated application of the instruments of national power

- Fiscally constrained supporting plans within the departments and agencies linking the interagency effort with specific operational capabilities and tasks

Means:

- Future Years National Security Plan providing budget projections necessary to resource the current National Security Strategy
- Documentation of capability gaps to be funded and capability overlaps no longer necessary with the synchronization and integration of interagency capabilities

The resulting data from these outputs enables fact-based decision making about future reforms. Once the "ways" connecting the "ends" and "means" are clearly and methodically established, quantifiable data on capability gaps, personnel and training deficiencies, strategic and operational risks, and unnecessary operational or administrative duplication become available to support and prioritize future reform. This could serve to mitigate the current concerns with comprehensive reform that stem from untested ideas based on nothing more than strong theoretical connections to the national security environment and objectives to guide decision makers.

It is Time to Act

It is a fact that even the best plans do not survive initial contact with the enemy, yet the alternative to planning is far worse. The increasingly expensive results of systemic failures in interagency execution, in terms of cost and lives, in the complex and dynamic post–Cold War security environment make systemic reform long overdue. The interagency process established by the National Security Act of 1947 is no longer sufficient to respond to the wide diversity of global threats and opportunities of the post–Cold War security environment. The problems are systemic, and the barriers preventing reform are significant. With the dawn of a new presidential administration and increasing national attention on interagency cooperation, however, there may not be a better time than now. Despite the din of partisan election-year politics, a growing body of thoughtful national security reform literature is emerging into choices between "soup-to-nuts" comprehensive reform proposals fighting for political momentum and a variety of ad hoc initiatives that may be advisable but do not fundamentally change the system. America cannot afford to squander this moment.

Another alternative is needed. Interagency deliberate planning—as the foundational first step toward incremental systemic reform—is pragmatic enough to overcome barriers preventing reform, responsive to the underlying problems preventing interagency unity of effort, and systemic enough to drive enduring change. SSQ

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