

# The NATIONAL STRATEGY FORUM REVIEW

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## **Chapter 15: Conclusion: National Security Management**

The last major revision of the U.S. national security management structure was included in the National Security Act of 1947. Domestic and international threats have changed substantially in the past 60 years, yet the process and structure of U.S. management of its national security have remained essentially unchanged – with the exception of some changes to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Goldwater-Nichols legislation of 1986. The global security environment is changing rapidly and organizational adaptations are required to enhance U.S. national security.

The National Security Act of 1947 was well suited to the post-WWII Cold War. Today, new threats are manifold: weaknesses of other states, asymmetric warfare, easy access to lethal low technology weapons, and a weakening nuclear anti-proliferation regime.

Contemporary national security issues are partly international and partly domestic. Military force projection in the recent past has been kinetic. The new missions launched in Iraq and Afghanistan are multi-faceted and require a broad approach: kinetic; diplomatic; nation-building; cultural anthropology; counter-terrorism, and counter-insurgency. This requires the simultaneous integration of U.S. assets and resources. The issues to be confronted are emerging with astonishing frequency.

A four-part management strategy is needed to assure that whatever objectives are set, they are part of a national security strategy with an appropriate tactical implementation component. This requires a management system composed of:

- A detailed threat assessment.
- A new working concept of national security.
- Identification of gaps and problems within the current system.
- Precise goal-setting to achieve effective reform.

For the past 60 years, *ad hoc* reactive response has been the hallmark of U.S. national security policy. The focus has been on extinguishing short-term fires rather than examining the causation of problems. The U.S. response to emerging trends and threats has been hasty and incremental.

The new global terrain requires a revised understanding of national security. Domestic and international issues replace the single pillar of external threats. On the domestic side, the affordability of military force projection is a new domestic consideration in parity with continuing economic prosperity and health concerns such as pandemics and natural disasters. Prudent preparation for acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and pandemics may be as important as the conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the U.S. relationship with Russia, China, and India.

The context of the new concept is *national and personal safety and security*. This could serve as the fundamental organizing principle of national security, because it would be readily understood by the American public, Congress, the administration, the media, and those who are charged with responsibility for developing a comprehensive national security strategy. If the goal is an American common cause pertaining to national security, the concept must be clear, congruent with the American ethos, and easily communicated by the media to the general public.

The executive office of the President has a great many major domestic and foreign issues on its agenda. Consequently, the White House is a national security bottleneck. It is hierarchical and does not always know what the disparate national security agencies are doing. This hinders the administration in integrating U.S. resources and assets. Past and present administrations have required departments to report directly to the president. Instead, an ensemble is needed in which there is inter-agency mission-related discussion and formulation of recommendations before reporting to the president.

The categories of management change that are required are similar to strategies employed by small businesses and large corporations:

- Although the National Security Council serves as an executive secretariat and advisor to the president, its organization and mission need reformation. Decentralization of policy nodes would promote inter-agency cooperation and liaison before options are presented to the president for discussion and decision.
- Congress' role in national security is maladaptive. Oversight is often ineffective, and its power of the purse is frequently exercised through animus rather than allocating finite resources based on the shifting needs of various national security agencies.
- Budgeting for national security is designed to provide funds for departments and agencies. However, funds are not allocated for specific missions, nor are they allocated for inter-agency missions among the 29 federal entities that report directly to the president.
- The present system concentrates enormous power in one person, the president, who is often a better politician than manager. The private sector is probably better positioned through its education and experience to manage any enterprise, including most

government management processes, better than governmental officials. This suggests adopting widespread use of corporate executives who are free of conflicts of interest to consult with federal agencies regarding the management of national security.

- The ongoing professional educational development of national security personnel is imperative. There are approximately 100,000 professionals employed by the 15 national security intelligence agencies. Although the bureaucracy is often referred to pejoratively, its skill and reputation could be enhanced by incentives, preparation, and change of organizational culture.

It is unlikely that either the president or Congress will adapt easily to management reformation. Even if they are willing to do so, the drag of ad hoc "putting out fires" and Executive-Congressional partisan tension and acrimony may prevent them from doing so. The opportunity and responsibility devolves to an informed citizenry that is not well positioned to compel effective reformation.

See the *Project on National Security Reform* for outstanding recommendations in this regard: [www.pnsr.org](http://www.pnsr.org).