

**THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY:  
DOCUMENTING STRATEGIC VISION**

**Second Edition**

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## FOREWORD

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act requires the President to submit an annual report on the National Security Strategy. In theory, a formal presentation of grand strategy was intended to lend coherence to the budgeting process; a clear statement of interests, objectives, and concepts for achieving them gave Congress a clear idea of the resources required to support the President's strategy. The problem with such documents is that they often create the false impression that strategy formulation is a rational and systemic process. In fact, strategy formulation both within the executive branch and between the executive branch and Congress is an intensely political process from which national strategy emerges after protracted bargaining and compromise. Key personalities do what they can agree to do.

Don Snider, as an Army colonel, participated in this process at the National Security Council, and prepared the *1988 Report on National Security Strategy*. This study is his account of the strategy formulation process as viewed from the White House.

The Strategic Studies Institute is pleased to publish this study as part of its ongoing efforts to disseminate the substance and process of national strategy and supporting military strategy.

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DON M. SNIDER is Director, Political-Military Studies, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He joined the Center in March 1990 after retirement from active duty with the U.S. Army. Since 1980 he had specialized in assignments related to military strategy and defense policy, serving consecutively as Chief of Plans for the Theater Army in Europe; Joint Planner for the Army Chief of Staff; Deputy Director of Strategy, Plans and Policy on the Army General Staff; and Federal Executive Fellow at the Brookings Institution. He then joined the staff of the National Security Council in the White House in 1987 as Director, Defense Policy, serving in both the Reagan and Bush Administrations. Within the Center, he specializes in national security strategy, defense policy and programs, military strategy, and European security issues. Dr. Snider holds Master of Arts degrees in Economics and Public Policy Administration from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Public Policy from the University of Maryland. He has held faculty positions at West Point and at the National Defense University.

## SUMMARY

The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 requires the President annually to submit an articulation of national grand strategy. There have been six such reports published, two during the second Reagan administration (1987 and 1988), three by the Bush administration (1990, 1991 and 1993), and one by the Clinton administration in July 1994.

Several conclusions about the formulation of American national security strategy can be drawn from the way in which these reports were developed. Perhaps most importantly is the notion that today there is no consensus as to an appropriate grand strategy for the United States. Second, the executive branch traditionally does not conduct long-range planning in a substantive or systematic manner. Third, what the executive branch does do is episodic planning for particular events as they rise to prominence.

The issue addressed in the following paper is whether it is wise in the future to attempt anything more than broad and episodic planning as a part of the formulation of strategy at this level. The art of devising and articulating strategy is that of combining the various elements of power and relating them to the desired end. But in the final analysis, people of goodwill and intelligence will have to place national interests above political, personal, or even organizational concerns if the United States is to be served well by a coherent and appropriate strategy.

**THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY:  
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**Introduction.**

SEC. 603. ANNUAL REPORT ON NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

. . . Sec. 104. (a)(1) The President shall transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States . . .

(2) The national security strategy report for any year shall be transmitted on the date on which the President submits to Congress the budget for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of Title 31, United States Code.

(b) Each national security strategy report shall set forth the national security strategy of the United States and shall include a comprehensive description and discussion of the following:

(1) The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.

(2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States.

(3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1).

(4) The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.

(5) Such other measures as may be helpful to inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States.

(c) Each national security strategy report shall be transmitted in both a classified and an unclassified form.<sup>1</sup>

By the above language, a small section of a much larger reform package known as the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Congress amended the National Security Act of 1947 to require annually a written articulation of grand strategy from each succeeding President. In so doing, Congress was attempting to legislate a solution to what it, and many observers, believed to be a legitimate and significant problem of long-standing in our governmental processes--an inability within the executive branch to formulate, in an coherent and integrated manner, judiciously using resources drawn from all elements of national power, the mid- and long-term strategy necessary to defend and further those interests vital to the nation's security.

Few in the Congress at that time doubted that there existed a grand strategy. The nation had been following "containment" in one form or another for over 40 years. What they doubted, or disagreed with, was its *focus* in terms of values, interests and objectives; its *coherence* in terms of relating means to ends; its *integration* in terms of the elements of power; and its *time* horizon. In theory, at least to the reformers, a clearly written strategy would serve to inform the Congress better on the needs for resources to execute the strategy, thus facilitating the annual authorization and appropriation processes, particularly for the Department of Defense.

There have now been six such reports published, two during the second Reagan administration (1987 and 1988), three by the Bush administration (1990, 1991 and 1993), and most recently, the first report by the Clinton administration (July 1994).

This paper, written by the individual responsible for the preparation of the 1988 report and in cooperation with the officials responsible for drafting the 1990, 1991, 1993, and 1994 reports,<sup>2</sup> draws on their experiences to provide insights into the

process as well as the individual products.

### **The Political Context.**

Before discussing the individual reports, we must understand the larger context in which these reports are produced, beyond that in the National Security Council and its staff where they are initially drafted and ultimately approved. First, it should be understood that the requirement for the report did not originate solely, or even mainly, from within the Congress. In fact, the Congress was, at the time of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, much more interested in reforming the Department of Defense; what was reformed east of the Potomac was of much less interest.<sup>3</sup>

Like most pieces of legislation, the idea for a Presidential statement of grand strategy had been percolating for several years in many locations--in think tanks, from public-minded citizens, from former government officials, from professional associations, from the academic literature, and from specific interest groups formed for the express purpose of fostering the requirement for such a report. As expected from an open, pluralistic process, each proponent had its own purposes for desiring such a statement, resulting in differing expectations of what the structure, content and use of the final report would be. In retrospect, it is clear that inclusion of the requirement for such a report in the final Goldwater-Nichols bill followed one of the better known maxims of the policy community--"if we can agree on what we want, let's not try to agree on why we want it."

Secondly, in this particular topic there is always the issue of imprecise language. Just what is national security strategy, as opposed to grand strategy, or defense strategy, or even national military strategy? And what are the distinguishable elements of power of the United States, and the boundaries between them? How can national security strategy subsume foreign policy as the Act seems to imply by its language? Obviously, there was, and is, no real consensus on this language either in academia, where the public servants in Washington earlier took their training, or in Washington where they practice their arts.

But, as we all know, language does make a difference, particularly within the executive branch where authorities and



responsibilities represent power. Even more so, within the interagency arena, where responsibilities for the preparation for this particular report are viewed as direct access to the President's overall agenda, and thus highly desirable, there initially exists little consensus as to the components of a national security strategy and what represents coherence. This imprecision in the language of the strategic art compounds the problem even among those who want a quality product.

The flip side of this positive, "I want to be part of the process," view is the recognition within the executive branch that this is not the only, or the principal, or even the most desirable means for the President to articulate publicly his strategic vision. What President in a fast-paced, media-oriented world wants to articulate once a year, in a static, written report a detailed statement of his forward-looking strategic vision? If ever there is a surefire means of insuring that one's boss would be "hoisted on his own petard," this is it to many of the President's closest political advisors. To influence public opinion and resource allocations it is considered far better to depend on current, personal testimonies by administration officials before the Congress, supported by Presidential and cabinet-level speeches, to create a coherent and wide-spread campaign of public diplomacy to the electorate of America. This view relegates the NSSR to a report of mushy "globaloney" before Congress.

The writer must also provide, for context, a feel for the political atmosphere within which the 1987 and 1988 reports were prepared. My tenure on the staff of the National Security Council began just after the Iran-Contra fiasco and during the implementation of the Tower Commission recommendations.<sup>4</sup> To say that White House/congressional relations were at absolute gridlock would be true, but would also vastly understate the passion, hostile intensity, and hyper-legalistic approach being taken by both sides on most every item of the mutual agenda. Whether it be war powers, strategic modernization, strategic defenses, or regional foreign and defense policies, there was a pervasive *modus vivendi* of little quarter being asked, and only rarely any given.

During the Bush administration the atmosphere improved significantly for the first two years, but thereafter "gridlock"

prevailed. Similarly, after the first year of the Clinton administration relations between the Executive and Congress deteriorated appreciably, particularly on matters of foreign policy. Thus in every case, the operating atmosphere in which each strategy report was prepared was one of intense, adversarial politics. It was clear from the beginning of each cycle that this report was not to be a neutral planning document, as many academics and even some in uniform think it to be. Rather it was, and still is in my judgement, intended to serve five primary purposes.

First, the central, external purpose of the report beyond the executive branch is to communicate strategic vision to Congress, and thus legitimize a rationale for resources. The stated intent of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation is broadly accepted as valid for effective political discourse on issues affecting the nation's security--the Congress and the Executive need a common understanding of the strategic environment and the administration's intent as a starting point for future dialogue. That said, however, it is understood that in the adversarial environment that prevails, this report can only provide a beginning point for the dialogue necessary to reach such a "common" understanding.

The second purpose is to communicate the same vision to a number of other quite different constituencies. Many of these are foreign, and extensive distributions through the United States Information Agency have proven most effective at communicating changing U.S. intentions to the governments of many nations not on our summit agendas.

The third purpose is to communicate to selected domestic audiences, often political supporters of the President who want to see their particular issue prominently displayed under Presidential signature. Others, less political and more public-minded, want to see coherence and farsightedness in the security policies of their government: a strategy they could, as citizens, fully support.

Fourth, there is the internal constituency of those in the executive branch to whom the process of creating the document is recognized to be of immense substantive value. This is so because the process of creating the report also creates internal

consensus on foreign and defense policies. This point cannot be overemphasized. Every new administration faces this challenge as it transitions from campaign to governance, particularly if foreign policy has not been a major issue in the campaign. The fact is, it is simply impossible to document a strategy where none exists! Few things educate new political appointees faster as to their own strategic sensings, or to the qualities and competencies of the "permanent" government they lead within executive bureaucracies, than to have to commit in writing to the President their plans for the future and how they can be integrated, coordinated and otherwise shared with other agencies and departments. The ability to forge consensus among these competing views on direction, priorities and pace, and getting "on board" important players three political levels down from the president is recognized as an invaluable, if not totally daunting, opportunity for a new administration.<sup>5</sup>

And lastly, any Presidential document, regardless of originating requirement, always must be viewed in the context of how it contributes, both in terms of substance and presentation, to the overall agenda of the President. Unfortunately, Congress unwittingly insured that the document would usually be submitted in a low-profile manner since it is required early in January with the budget submission--just before one of the President's premier communication events of the year, the State of the Union address. Well coordinated, the two activities can be mutually supportive, but more normal to date is, appropriately, the dominance of the State of the Union address.

Thus, with these five purposes in mind, all legitimate and necessary but understood to require difficult trade-offs in their completion, one sets out in the name of the President to task the Cabinet officials and their strategy-minded lieutenants to articulate the preferred national security strategy for the United States. What follows is an iterative, interagency process of some months (or years in the case of the Clinton administration), culminating in multiple drafts and several high level meetings, including the NSC, to resolve differences and ultimately approve the final document.

### **The 1987 and 1988 National Security Strategy Reports.**

Since the Goldwater-Nichols legislation was approved late in

1986, the 1987 report was prepared in a very limited period of time and reflected the intent to document only current strategic thinking. In its two major sections, one each on foreign policy and defense policy, the document reflected the Reagan administration's strong orientation toward Cabinet government, and a strong emphasis on military instruments of power, almost to the exclusion of the others. Taken as a whole, of course the document portrayed a comprehensive strategic approach toward the Soviet Union. The section on integrating elements of power referred to the "NSC system" as the integrator, rather than documenting current strategies toward regions or subregions. The NSC system in the Reagan administrations had produced by then over 250 classified national security decision directives (NSDD7). It was believed that these represented at any point a set of substrategies "effective in promoting the integrated employment of the broad and diverse range of tools available for achieving our national security objectives."<sup>6</sup>

Two major changes from the 1987 strategy were introduced in the 1988 report. With twin deficits prominent on the political agenda (federal budget and balance of trade, the first change was to emphasize all the elements of national power in an integrated strategy, particularly the economic element which scarcely had been discussed in the previous report. This logically led to the second adjustment, which was to present separate strategies for each region with an integration of the various instruments of power. Both efforts probably rate an "A" for idea and effort, and no more than a "C" for results as seen on the printed page or implemented by the administration. Behind the printed page, however, I am confident that those who participated in this interagency process were subsequently much more inclined to appreciate and to seek an approach of integrated policy instruments toward the resolution of U.S. security challenges in a region or subregion.

### **The 1990 National Security Strategy Report.**

The 1990 report was prepared in a vortex of global change. The Bush Administration began with a detailed interagency review of security strategy in the spring of 1989. This effort--and the natural turbulence of a new administration shaking out its personnel and procedures, notably the Tower nomination--had pushed the preparation of the 1989 report into the early fall.

Then, events in Eastern Europe made sections of the report, as well as the underlying policy, obsolete. The original Goldwater-Nichols legislation had implicitly assumed a fairly steady state in the international environment, with the annual report articulating incremental changes to both perceptions of and responses to that environment. The pace of change throughout the last half of 1989 pushed the publication of the next report into March 1990.

In content the 1990 report attempted to embrace fully the reality of change in the Soviet Union and, especially, in Eastern Europe. The response to that change as discussed in the report, however, was admittedly cautious. At least one critic described the document as schizophrenic, with the reading of the environment in the front at significant variance with the prescribed response in the back. This demonstrates once again how much easier it is in a rather open, pluralistic process to gain consensus on what is being observed, as opposed to how the nation should respond to that observed change. The process in 1989-90 did show, however, the potential of the statutory requirement for a documented strategy to force public assessments of events and developments that might otherwise have been avoided, either because of their difficulty or their political sensitivity.

#### **The 1991 National Security Strategy Report.**

The quickening pace of world change--and a deepening crisis and, ultimately, war in the Middle East--served again to delay the 1991 report. Key decision makers focused on multiple, demanding developments. After August 2, at least, the foreground of their view was filled with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, coalition building and military actions. In the background, and occasionally intruding to the fore, were fundamental changes in the U.S.-Soviet relationship, major treaties on strategic and conventional weaponry, and the final dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. There was little room in anyone's focus, particularly within the NSC staff, to develop, coordinate and publish a comprehensive and definitive Presidential statement of strategy. Although its major elements had been drafted by February, the 1991 report was not published until August.

Like its predecessors, events forced the focus of the 1991

report to the U.S.-Soviet relationship as the departure point for any discussion of future American strategy. More than preceding reports, however, this one attempted to broaden the definition of national security. In purely military terms, it proclaimed regional conflict as the organizing focus for American military capabilities, and suggested that new terms of reference for nuclear deterrence would shortly be needed. Politically, it attempted to turn the compass on arms control from east-west to north-south for a much expanded discussion of policy to retard proliferation. Even more than the previous reports, the document attempted to communicate the idea that American economic well-being was included in the definition of national security, even though discussions of specific programs to improve competitiveness or to combat trade and budget deficits were generally lacking.

### **The 1993 National Security Strategy Report.**

The last of the three strategy reports of the Bush administration was published in January 1993, just before the inauguration of president-elect Bill Clinton. A draft had been prepared in early 1992, but several summits and the press of the 1992 campaign precluded its completion. Another contributing factor was the content of that campaign, which focussed almost exclusively on the domestic economy, obviating the political usefulness of a new statement of security strategy.

Unlike the previous reports in both the Reagan and Bush administrations, this one was intended quite clearly to document the accomplishments of the past rather than to point to the way ahead. The Republicans were leaving the White House after twelve years of stewardship of the nation's foreign and defense policies, including in their minds a remarkably successful conclusion to, and transition out of, the Cold War. As the titles of two of the report's sections attest--"Security through Strength: Legacy and Mandate," and "The World as It Can Be, If We Lead and Attempt to Shape It as Only America Can"--they wanted to document their accomplishments in strategic terms, as well as to put down markers by which the Clinton administration's foreign policy could be judged.

In terms of strategic content, however, there was little change between this report and the 1991 version. Both emphasize

a steady, deliberate transition from a grand strategy of containment to one of "collective engagement" on a regional basis. Militarily, both contain the same defense strategy of four pillars as developed earlier by the Cheney-Powell team.<sup>7</sup> What differences there are, are found in the 1993 report's heavy emphasis on a broad goal of "democratic peace" and the absolute necessity of American leadership in attaining it, even to a limited degree, in a world of increasing interdependencies.

### **The Clinton Administration.**

In June 1994, the Clinton administration published their first National Security Strategy Report (NSSR) containing their strategy of "engagement and enlargement." A number of reasons have been offered as to why it was a year and a half into their term before a comprehensive statement of strategy was finished: the President was elected to focus on, and is focussing on, difficult and time-consuming issues of domestic policy; it has taken longer than anticipated to recruit political appointees such that the government "reflects America;" we have announced our strategy through a series of speeches, and will get to the Congressional report later; etc.

In fact, this lack of a published strategy reflects the lack of consensus initially found within the administration, and the difficulty that caused in formulating a new grand strategy. This is not to imply that the administration, or at least parts of it, had not given much thought and discussion to various aspects of an overall security strategy--the report of the Department of Defense's Bottom-Up Review documenting one such effort.<sup>8</sup> But, by one official's count, the NSSR went through 21 drafts between early 1993 and publication in July 1994. The odyssey of the drafts portrays a lack of guidance and attention, shifting priorities among too many goals, a series of bureaucratic battles between the principle protagonists--the departments of Defense and State, several restarts, and after the first six months, constant intrusions from the realities of foreign affairs beyond the anticipation of the administration.

This portrayal is, however, superficial in my judgement. There are more fundamental reasons for the lengthy and arduous process through which the Clinton administration persevered to produce their view of the world and America's role in it. First,

it took a long time for the administration to settle on a set of principles from which to design and implement a consistent foreign policy. Second, it remains to be seen how strongly the President believes in, and how consistently he will act on, those principles outlined in his new report. The President has, in fact, already acted on a number of the principles as documented in the report.

The Clinton administration has created a national security structure within the Executive branch that allows each major point of view on national security an institutional power base just short of the President, and with no other office capable of integrating them. The important points of view, particularly relevant to crisis management, but also applicable to formulating strategy for a NSSR, and their organizational bases are: the military options for security and stability in the Department of Defense; bilateral relations and transnational issues with a regional focus, in the Department of State and on the White House staff; considerations of economic security, particularly as they influence the domestic economy, in the National Economic Council supported by very strong Treasury and Commerce Departments, and the US Trade Representative; and, issues of environmental security, in the Office of the Vice President. When working as the National Security Council, opinions of cabinet-level representatives of this structure can only be melded together by the President himself, not by the National Security Advisor or the White House Chief of Staff.

Foreign policy issues sometimes seem to be dealt with as they arise, and seemingly with much more concern for how they will play at home than their longer term impact abroad. This is not true in every case, and the Clinton administration has had some notable successes: agreement on GATT and NAFTA trade accords; denuclearization in Russia and Ukraine; extension of security assurances, even if somewhat weak, eastward into Central Europe by the Partners for Peace program in NATO; an apparent agreement with North Korea on plutonium production; and the reestablishment of the Aristide government in Haiti are among this administration's success. But in other important instances--abandonment of their original policy of "assertive multilateralism" after a tactical reversal of several failed policy initiatives in Bosnia; a brief attempt to denuclearize South Asia; and, before finally acting, an extended vacillation



over what to do about an illegal regime in Haiti--the process seeks more often a quick resolution and "victory" for the President than it does to define and fulfill the longer term role and interests of the United States on a very disorderly world.

Finally, there is the political situation of the President, who won only 43 percent of the popular vote running as a New Democrat in 1992. In addition to dealing with a Republican majority in Congress, he now must now create consensus within the Democratic party, since he is largely opposed in a unified manner by the Republicans except on issues of international trade. After the first six months, and particularly after the Congressionally mandated withdrawal from Somalia and the subsequent dismissal of his Secretary of Defense, the President's foreign policy record has become a major issue for his opponents.

This was even the more so in June and July 1994 when the President's polls on foreign policy were the worst ever, showing no boost whatsoever for his participation in the G-7 summit and his subsequent European tour. Having now signed and sent to Congress his first formal report of security strategy, it will be interesting to see if the concern of one White House staffer will be valid, "To publish a detailed report of national security strategy now would just provide chum for the sharks."

This may not, however, be the case. As published, the Clinton NSSR contains a remarkably different vision of how to provide for America's "security" in the future. First, the conception of security is much more broad than used by earlier administrations. Given the new environment with apparently no military threats to the nation's physical security, the administration has defined security as "protecting our people, our territory, and our way of life." The addition of the last clause underlines the recognition that the strategy must be designed as much, if not more, for exploiting "the opportunities to make the nation more safe and prosperous," as it is for protecting it from a new class of "dangers" to its security. When contrasted to the necessities and burdens of the Cold War, this seizing of the historical opportunity, and that based on improving the lot of America's domestic life as well as promoting its democratic and economic aspects overseas, is a refreshingly positive and attractive approach.

Further, there is a simple elegance of using only three

national security goals--enhancing our security, promoting prosperity at home, and promoting democracy--under which to integrate all of the government's efforts to advance US interests. Thereby, the many ways in which various means contribute to these ends and the interrelationships involved are more readily apparent, as are the trade-offs between them (to the consternation of some who have for decades seen their particular contribution to national security as their undeniable claim on resources!). As conceived and published, the strategy, for instance, makes clear that the contribution of various means to provide for "environmental security" contributes to the first goal--"enhancing our security"--n much the same way as does "maintaining a strong defense capability."

But, even with this truly post-Cold War conception of our security coupled with a much more sweeping array of policy instruments for its pursuit--from population control, to environmental security, to nonproliferation initiatives, etc.--one is left with the impression that some of the more traditional, but vitally effective, means of providing for our national security, e.g., nuclear deterrence, have been inadequately addressed in the strategy. Equally noticeable by their absence in this globalist approach to national security are the priorities necessary to make this strategy operative. While the "engagement" of the United States in the future is "to be selective," dependent on the intensity of the interest involved, there is little discussion of how U.S. leadership--"Never has American leadership been more essential"--is to be effective without direct engagement of our national capabilities, and the specific causes or regions in which that must be done are not made clear. In fact, the foreign policy record of the first two years already demonstrates this to be one of the strategy's major shortcomings.

In the months and years ahead this issue of the effectiveness of American leadership may well be the linchpin of any strategic formulation for advancing America's interests in the world, including this new one by the Clinton administration. There are several reason for this. First, allies and friends no longer need our assistance with their security, or so they perceive and act. As a result, the leverage that extended deterrence and other strategic arrangements of the Cold War accrued to our leadership has withered. Second, the economic

aspects of Clinton's foreign policy may be perceived as intrusive from the perspective of a nation whose markets we want to be opened to our exports. This has already caused several former allies and friends to distance themselves from what they see as economic nationalism, and a leadership that is fostering it. Third, America's problems at home, particularly faltering education, rampant crime and violence, and rising racial divisions have dimmed the message we send to promote the spread of democracy abroad. If these are the result of our form of democracy, as many rising industrial nations believe, we are promoting a form of cultural imperialism that they can do without.

### **Conclusions.**

Several conclusions about the formulation of American national security strategy can be drawn from the experiences of these six reports, conclusions of process and substance that, perhaps, are arrived at uniquely from the NSC perspective.

The first conclusion is obvious from the earlier discussions, but so deeply pervades all else that I want to state it explicitly--there is no real consensus today as to the appropriate grand strategy for the United States. And, more important, this lack of consensus is due far less to any type of constraint on strategic thinking than it is to the fundamental value differences in our electorate, and the resulting legacy of federal government divided between the political parties and buffeted by the myriad of factions that effectively cross party lines on separate issues. It is easy to agree with those academics concerned that the dysfunctions of "divided government" and "demosclerosis"<sup>9</sup> increasingly preclude coherent strategic behavior on the part of our nation.<sup>10</sup>

After all, grand strategy is really the idea of allocating resources to create in both the short and long term various instruments of power, instruments with which the nation then provides for its defense and the furtherance of its aims in the world. True, there have been extraordinary changes in the external environment, and we won the Cold War. But to many, including those working to formulate security strategy through this period of intense change, the erosion of consensus on foreign policy was apparent far earlier. One need look no

further than the foreign and economic assistance allocations from roughly 1984 onward, or the endless clashes on modernization of strategic defenses, or the constant tug of war on war powers and treaty obligations, or the Reagan administration's attempts to buttress "aggressive unilateralism" and the Clinton administration's short-lived attempt to pursue "assertive multilateralism." And, as the Iran-Contra fiasco showed to all, without a modicum of consensus there can be no effective security strategy or policy.

This conclusion is stated first because it conditions those that follow, and because it conditions one's expectations for the specific mode of formulating national security strategy that is discussed in this paper. A Presidential strategy report can never be more than it really is, a statement of preference from the executive branch as to current, and perhaps future, grand strategy. Given our government of shared powers, it remains for a constructively adversarial process with the Congress to refine that preferential strategy into one that has any chance of being effective--one around which there can be created domestic political consensus, and thus an allocation of resources effective in creating instruments of national power.

The second conclusion focuses on the function of long-range planning, or strategic planning, which is the base from which security strategy formulation must be built. Simply stated, in my experience the executive branch of government does not do long-range planning in a substantive or systematic manner. (I make a sharp distinction between planning and programming.) To be sure, there are pockets of planning activity within the "permanent" government of many departments and agencies, particularly Defense and State. Some of this is good, comprehensive planning from the perspective of that particular agency. But it is devoid of the political dynamic which can be provided only by the participation of those who have won elections, which under our system of government provides the authority to set future directions and pace in security policy and strategy. Taken in the whole then, particularly given the number of departments and agencies within which there is little planning activity, I am comfortable stating this conclusion in a stark form.

This paucity of strategic planning is well documented in

academic writings, particularly the memoirs of former officials. And, the causes are well known to political scientists.<sup>11</sup> In my own experience, two causes stand out. The first is the limit of what is physically possible for elected officials to do in any given amount of time. Long-range planning and strategy formulation will always run a poor second to the pressing combination of crisis management and near-term policy planning and implementation. There is seldom a week that the NSC staff and the planning staffs of the principal Cabinet officers are not *fully* involved in either preparation for or clean-up after a presidential trip, a summit, a visit by a head of state (or government), or a major negotiation. And this is as it should be; the maxim is true in diplomatic and political activity at this level--if today is not cared for, tomorrow will not arrive in a manageable form. Secondly, the pernicious effects of divided government, manifest in micromanaging and punitive legislation on the one hand and intractable stonewalling and relentless drives for efficiency on the other, preclude resources for permanent, long-range planning staffs that could institutionalize such a process.

In place of a systematic approach to long-range or strategic planning, what the executive branch does do, and in some cases rather well, is episodic planning for particular events. This is how one can describe the creation of each of the published strategy reports--a focused, comprehensive effort of some 4-6 months involving political leadership and their permanent bureaucracies in the development of common vision and purpose for the near-term future. The often cited NSC-68 and PRM-10 reviews are historic examples of other successful, but episodic, strategic planning events.<sup>12</sup> A more recent example is the Ikle-Wohlstetter Commission of 1988.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, in most cases these were incremental responses to a rather consistent external security environment, made by administrations, often new, that were stewards of a consensus U.S. grand strategy. But the fact remains these episodic events did produce in-depth reviews across the range of interests and instruments of national power, and resulted in much more than rhetorical change to the overall strategy.

The relevant question now, it seems to me, given the inherent constraints to systematic, long-range planning noted above, is whether it is wise in the future to attempt anything

more than broad, but episodic, planning exercises for the formulation of grand strategy. More specifically, should the Executive attempt a new statement of grand strategy every year? My own experience, reinforced by the above historical examples, leads to the conclusion that comprehensive strategy reviews should only be executed twice during an administration's tenure, during the first and third years to be presented early to each two-year session of the Congress. Further, if the pace of change in external events subsides, a valid case could probably be made to conduct such a review only once, during the first year of a new administration.

While the adoption of comprehensive strategy reviews at set intervals would address one problem with the coherent formulation of strategy, a much more formidable constraint also is apparent from experiences, which is offered as a third conclusion--the executive branch is not well organized to accommodate the changing metrics of national power,<sup>14</sup> particularly the reascendancy of economic power in the formulation and execution of future U.S. grand strategy.<sup>15</sup>

This problem does not stem from a failure to recognize and treat the economic element of power for what it is, the long-term strength underpinning the other elements of power.<sup>16</sup> Rather it stems from a failure to agree on the appropriate policies at the federal level to preserve that essential power, policies that are in fact more domestic than foreign in their impact. Toward the end of the Cold War, this failure was manifest in several forms, notably the political inability to deal effectively with the twin deficits of the 1980s. They still are not addressed in a seriously compelling manner early in the 1990s even though their root cause, a systemic excess of national investment over savings, is well known. Volumes have been written pinning the blame on both the Executive and the Congress; and it appears there is quite enough for both as neither has led the electorate to understand the severity of the issues or otherwise to forge consensus for resolution.

A second major contributor to the failure is the complexity of recent arrangements for making economic policy. At least five cabinet officials have a significant role (Treasury, State, Defense, Commerce and the U.S. Trade Representative). Integrating these responsibilities, until the Clinton administration, has

rested with three agencies within the Executive Office of the President: the Economic Policy Council, the National Security Council, and the Domestic Policy Council. Advice comes from two more agencies: the Office of Management and Budget and the Council of Economic Advisors. The integrated, coordinated use of economic instruments of power, particularly in the context of regional security strategies, was understandably difficult to achieve in this organizational environment. Neither is it yet clear that the approach of the Clinton administration, a new National Economic Council co-equal to the National Security Council, will be any more effective.

Beyond the problems of finding time to work on strategy and finding someone to be in charge of economic policy, I conclude that there is another shortcoming of a different nature in the current process. The art of formulating strategy is that of combining the various elements of power and relating them to the desired end--the key is integration. This belief is derived as much from experience in crisis management as in strategy formulation. Too often, after a crisis was ongoing, it was clear that there had been little prior coordination or integration of policy instruments focused on a particular region or country before the crisis. Too often the only effective instruments for immediate leverage were military. In retrospect it was clear that if we had been pursuing a well-documented and integrated strategic approach toward the region or country in question, one in which the current policy instruments drew from all elements of power, the ability for more effective response would have been greatly enhanced.

Increasingly in this post-Cold War era, those ends toward which we are developing a strategic approach are being defined at the regional and subregional level. Even strategies for such transnational issues as environmental security, terrorism and narcotics trafficking focus at the subregional level for implementation, as do many strategies for the use of economic power. But planning for the effective integration of policy instruments for the various regions and subregions remains problematic.

Lastly, I conclude, contrary to some of what is contained in this paper, that we should not concentrate exclusively on institutions and processes when discussing the development of

national security strategy. As I have seen so often, it is people who really define the character of the institutions and who make the processes what they are. Almost uniformly I have observed people of intelligence and goodwill respond to the need to place national interests above those of organization or person. This is not to conclude, however, that all is well and we can count on such people consistently overcoming the real constraints on strategic thinking and behavior in our government. Rather, it is to conclude that it is much too early for a cynical approach to the on-going reformulation of America's role in the world.

**Notes:**

1. 50 U.S.C. 402, (Title I of the National Security Act of 1947).

2. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Brigadier General Michael Hayden, USAF, in providing insights on the preparation of the 1990 and 1991 reports, Colonel Jeff Jones, USA, on the 1993 report, and Dr. Peter Feaver on the report of the Clinton Administration. All judgements in this paper remain, of course, solely the responsibility of the author.

3. Even though much of the reform literature, such as the 1985 Report of the Senate Armed Services Committee, "Organization of the Department of Defense--The Need for Change," discusses needed reforms in both the executive and congressional branches, Congress chose only to pursue reform within DOD. Since Congress was not reforming itself, it was not in a position to lean directly on the Executive Office of the President for reforms.

4. *Report of the President's Special Review Board*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987, also available as *The Tower Commission Report* by several publishers. Of particular interest to the context of this paper are Part II, "Organizing for National Security," and Part V, "Recommendations."

5. For an example of the benefits to the new Bush administration as the political appointees executed a strategic review, see: Don M. Snider, *Strategy, Forces, and Budgets: Dominant Influences in Executive Decision-making, Post-Cold War, 1989-1991*, Strategic Studies Institute, USAWC, 1993, p. 18-20.



6. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, January 1987, p. 40.

7. For a case study on the development of security strategy within the Bush administration, see: Snider, *Ibid*.

8. Les Aspin, Report of the Bottom-Up Review, Department of Defense, October 1993.

9. Jonathan Rauch, *Demosclerosis: The Silent Killer of American Government*, Random House, Inc., 1994.

10. For example, see Aaron Friedberg, "Is the United States Capable of Acting Strategically?," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter 1991, pp. 15-20.

11. David C. Kozak, "The Bureaucratic Politics Approach: The Evolution of the Paradigm," *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*, David Kozak and James Keagle, eds., Rienner Publishers, 1988, pp. 3-15.

12. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp. 89-127, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, McGraw Hill, 1983, pp. 51-52.

13. Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, *Discriminate Deterrence*, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989.

14. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, 1990, pp. 200, 227; and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, "US Foreign Policy and Europe, 1990-2000," *Brookings Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Fall 1990, pp. 8-10.

15. Samuel Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests," *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 1, January/February 1991, pp. 8-16; and Robert Hormats, "The Roots of American Power," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 3, Summer 1991, pp. 130-135.

16. Hormats, p. 130.

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