

CHAPTER 10

THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: DOCUMENTING STRATEGIC VISION

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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.¹

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. The Executive Branch has more often than not failed to formulate, in an integrated and coherent manner judiciously using resources drawn from all elements of national power, a 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 several such reports published. In this essay we will review eight of them: two from the second Reagan administration (1987 and 1988), three from the Bush administration (1990, 1991 and 1993), and three from the two Clinton administrations (1994, 1997, 1998).

This monograph, co-authored by the individual responsible for the preparation of the 1988 report, in cooperation with the officials responsible for drafting the 1990, 1991, 1993, and 1994 reports,² and by a military scholar who has both executed the strategy and taught it to future generations of officers, 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.³

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 will 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 media interventions, to create a coherent and wide-spread campaign of public diplomacy to the electorate of America. Unfortunately, this view relegates the content of the National Security Strategy Report (NSSR) to mushy “globaloney” to be fed to Congress.

We must also provide, for context, a feel for the political atmosphere within which the 1987 and 1988 reports were prepared. Dr. Snider’s 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.⁴ To say that White House/congressional relations were at absolute gridlock would be true, but would also vastly understate the passionate 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” again prevailed. Similarly, after the first year of the Clinton administration relations between the Executive and Congress deteriorated appreciably, particularly on matters of foreign policy; the spirit of cooperation between the legislative and executive branches was not fostered by the impeachment proceedings of 1999. Thus in every case the operating atmosphere in which the 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 our 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 the allocation of 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 and second-term 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 or re-newed administration.⁵

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, someone on the NSC staff sets out in the name of the President to task the Cabinet officials and their strategy-minded deputies 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 (NSDD). 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."⁶

Two major changes from the 1987 strategy were introduced in the 1988 report. With the twin deficits of the federal budget and the balance of trade prominent on the political agenda 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 while integrating 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, we are confident that those who participated in this interagency process were subsequently

much more inclined to appreciate and to seek the use 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 promptly 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 leading, ultimately, to war in the Middle East—served again to delay the 1991 report. Key decision makers focused on multiple, demanding developments. After August 2nd 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 unsuccessful 1992 campaign precluded its completion. Another contributing factor was the content of that campaign, which focused 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 12 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.⁷ What differences exist can be 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 if only to a limited degree, in a world of increasing interdependencies.

THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION.

In June 1994, the Clinton administration published its first NSSR containing that administration's strategy of "engagement and enlargement." A number of reasons were offered as to why it was a year and a half into the first term before a comprehensive statement of strategy was finished: "the President was elected to focus on, and is focusing 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"; and so forth.

In fact, the lack of a published strategy reflected the lack of an initial consensus 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.⁸ But, by one official's personal count, the first Clinton 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 principal protagonists—the Departments of Defense and State—several restarts, and constant intrusions from the realities of foreign affairs beyond the anticipation of the administration.

This portrayal is, however, superficial in many ways. There are more fundamental reasons for the lengthy and arduous process through which the Clinton administration persevered to produce its 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, the process by which they set about formulating their strategy was, to say the least, undisciplined.

The Clinton administration created a national security structure within the Executive Branch that provided each major point of view on security policy an institutional power base just short of the President, with no other office capable of integrating them. The important viewpoints and their organizational bases were particularly relevant to crisis management but also applicable to formulating strategy for a NSSR. They were: 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 new National Economic Council supported by very strong Treasury and Commerce Departments and the U.S. 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 could only be melded together by the President himself, not by the National Security Advisor or the White House Chief of Staff.⁹

Finally, there was 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 had to create consensus within the Democratic party, since he was 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 also became a major issue for his opponents. This was even 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. The concern of one White House staffer was revealing: "To publish a detailed report of national security strategy now would just provide chum for the sharks."

THE 1994 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY REPORT.

This turned out, however, not to be the case. As published, the 1994 Clinton National Security Strategy Report 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 that 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 based on a vision of 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 in 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 U.S. interests. This makes the many ways in which various means contribute to these ends and the interrelationships involved 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"—in much the same way as does "maintaining a strong defense capability."

But, even with this truly post-Cold War conception of U.S. security coupled with a much more sweeping array of policy instruments for its preservation—from population control, to environmental security, to nonproliferation initiatives—one is left with the impression that some of the more traditional, but vitally effective, means of providing for our national security were inadequately addressed in the strategy. Nuclear deterrence is only the most obvious example. Equally noticeable by their absence in this globalist approach were 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 Clinton administration demonstrates this to be one of the strategy's major shortcomings.

THE 1997 AND 1998 NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY REPORTS.

Issued in May 1997, the first National Security Strategy Report of the second Clinton administration bore the title "A National Security Strategy for a New Century." Its goals were the same as those of the 1994 report: to enhance American security, to bolster America's

economic prosperity, and to promote democracy abroad. However, perhaps in response to criticisms like the ones enumerated above of both the written and implemented foreign policies of the first Clinton administration, there was a new focus on enumerating priorities for America abroad.

The list of priorities began with the fostering of a peaceful, undivided, democratic Europe, reflecting the substantial investment in NATO expansion and in resolving the war in Bosnia of the previous four years. The second priority was the creation of a stable and prosperous Asian-Pacific community, again unsurprising in light of the Asian financial crisis at the time of writing. Non-regional priorities included expanding open markets and advancing the rule of law; serving as an “unrelenting” force for peace; countering transnational threats; and preserving a strong and ready military and diplomatic corps. Unobjectionable in themselves, the Administration could still be accused of a reach which exceeded its grasp, and it was also criticized for its low priority on military readiness at a time when cracks in the Department of Defense began to be more apparent.¹⁰ Stung by criticism of its inaction in Rwanda and heartened by apparent success in Bosnia, the 1997 Report also put priority on what it called “The Imperative of Engagement,” arguing that “American leadership and engagement in the world are vital for our security.”

The other notable change from the 1994 Report was a new focus on strategy implementation, built around the concepts of shaping the international environment, responding to international crises, and preparing now for an uncertain future. A range of policy tools were noted as effective in each of these areas. “Shaping” could be performed through diplomacy, international assistance, arms control, nonproliferation initiatives and military activities; to the extent that shaping the international environment in America’s interest was successful, it would become less necessary to respond to crises, from transnational threats to major theater warfare. Interestingly, national interests conceivably necessitating American responses were categorized as *vital*, *important*, or *humanitarian*. Finally, the task of “Preparing Now for an Uncertain Future” was given an increased emphasis in light of the increasing recognition that what some called a “defense budget train wreck” was brewing as a result of failures to replace equipment purchased during the Reagan defense buildup.¹¹

The 1997 Report concluded with a listing of “Integrated Regional Approaches” for Europe and Eurasia; East Asia and the Pacific; the Western Hemisphere; the Middle East, Southwest and Southeast Asia; and Africa, the last of which was promised increased emphasis in years to come.

The 1998 National Security Strategy Report, issued in October, shared both a title and much substance with the 1997 report. Differences were of emphasis and degree, highlighted by a deeper recognition of increased global economic interdependence as a result of the long-term effects of the Asian financial crisis. The 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review, with its pointed conclusions about the need to rebuild aging weapons platforms and concurrent stresses on military forces as a result of the deployments to Bosnia and Iraq, also played a hand in the revisions.¹² So, too, did an increasing awareness of the challenges presented by domestic terrorism, resulting in two Presidential Decision Directives (PDD 62 and 63) which

created structures to respond to domestic terrorism and to protect better a national infrastructure which was recognized to be vulnerable to both conventional and cyber attacks. The 1998 report also demonstrated a more integrated regional focus than did the 1997 report, with the three missions of enhancing security, promoting prosperity, and promoting democracy in each region separately highlighted.

The 2000 National Security Strategy Report, not yet released as of this paper's writing, can be expected to differ little from the 1998 report. If past trends are followed, it will become more a codification of the foreign policy accomplishments of the two Clinton administrations than a statement of true strategic principles. Like earlier reports issued in the twilight of administrations, it will play to the historical constituency of President Clinton and will attempt to provide a springboard for his chosen successor in the 2000 elections.

Our assessment of the Clinton Administrations' successes in foreign policy reveals a decidedly mixed record. Foreign policy issues seemed to be dealt with as they arose, too often with much more concern for how they would play at home than for their longer term impact abroad. This was not true in every case, and the Clinton administration had some notable successes: agreement on GATT and NAFTA trade accords; de-nuclearization in Russia and Ukraine; extension of security assurances, even if somewhat weak, eastward into Central Europe by the Partners for Peace program in NATO; and, an agreement with North Korea on plutonium production were among the first administration's successes. In other important instances—abandonment of the original policy of "assertive multilateralism" after a tactical reversal in Somalia and several failed policy initiatives in Bosnia; a brief attempt to de-nuclearize South Asia; and, before finally acting, an extended vacillation over what to do about an illegal regime in Haiti—the process sought more often a quick resolution and "victory" for the President than it did to define and fulfill the longer term roles and interests of the United States in a very disorderly world.

Similar comments and compliments could be made about the second Clinton administration. It appeared to recognize the important role of force in foreign policy with the summer 1995 airstrikes in Bosnia leading to the Dayton Agreement, but did not internalize the right lessons from that success. The lessons of the 1999 campaign in Kosovo have not yet been clearly drawn although pundits have already proclaimed a new "Clinton Doctrine" for the use of force: the United States will intervene in humanitarian emergencies when the expected costs are low and there is minimal risk to U.S. forces; when there is a real chance of doing long-term good as a result of the intervention; and when national interests as traditionally defined are involved or threatened. The inclusion of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary into NATO can also be seen as a success for the administration, but at least as much credit is probably owed to the Congress, which largely played to domestic constituencies in approving expansion of America's most important alliance. Similarly, perhaps more credit is owed to the Senators responsible for the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program as to the administration; certainly, blame for the failure of Senate ratification for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty should be distributed between both branches of government.

In the months and years ahead the issue of the effectiveness of American leadership may well be the linchpin of any strategic formulation for advancing America's interests in the

world. There are several reasons 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, unrelenting cultural wars and rising racial divisions, have dimmed the message America sends 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 eight reports, conclusions of process and substance that, perhaps, are arrived at uniquely from the perspective of the National Security Council.

The first is obvious from the earlier discussions, but so deeply pervades all else that it should be stated explicitly—*there is no operative consensus today as to the appropriate grand strategy for the United States*. More importantly, 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 dysfunction of "divided government" and "demosclerosis"¹³ increasingly preclude coherent strategic behavior on the part of our nation.¹⁴

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 these decades 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 monograph. 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 our experience *the Executive Branch does not do long-range planning in a substantive or systematic manner.* (We 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 as a whole then, particularly given the number of departments and agencies within which there is little planning activity, we are 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. The causes are well known to political scientists;¹⁵ two 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 in which 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 we describe the creation of each of the published strategy reports—a focused, comprehensive effort of some 4-6 months involving political leadership and the 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.¹⁶ Recent examples are the Ikle-Wohlstetter Commission of 1988¹⁷ and the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) of 1997.¹⁸ To be sure, in most cases these were incremental responses made by administrations, often new, who were stewards of an evolving grand strategy. The fact that the changes were incremental has much more to do, in our view, with the nature of divided government than it does with the quality of the review process itself; in most cases a reasonable range of alternatives were, in fact, presented to

civilian decision makers. Even if they chose narrowly, 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, 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 as the current legislation requires? We conclude 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, in preparation for the QDR.

Beyond the problems of finding the time to work on strategy, we believe 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 erupts, it is 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 are military. In retrospect it was clear that if the administration 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 responses 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 cyberwar, environmental security, terrorism and narcotics trafficking focus on implementation at the subregional level or even that of an individual nation. But planning for the effective integration of policy instruments for the various regions and subregions remains problematic.

Lastly, we conclude, contrary to some of what might be taken from this monograph, that we should not concentrate exclusively on institutions and processes when discussing the development of national security strategy. As we 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 we 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.

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 10

1. 50 U.S.C. 402, (Title I of the National Security Act of 1947).
2. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance of then Colonel, now Lieutenant 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 1994 report of the Clinton administration. All judgements in this paper remain, of course, solely the responsibility of the authors.
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 legislative 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, Force, and Budgets: Dominant Influences in Executive Decision—making, Post-Cold War, 1989-1991* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1993), pp. 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, *op cit.*
8. Les Aspin, Report of the Bottom-Up Review, Department of Defense (October 1993).
9. For excellent insights into decisionmaking within the first Clinton administration see Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995).
10. National Defense Panel, *Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: National Defense Panel, December 1997).
11. Don M. Snider, "The Coming Defense Train Wreck," *The Washington Quarterly* 19, 1 (Winter 1996), pp. 89-102.
12. William S. Cohen, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, May 1997).
13. Jonathan Rauch, *Demosclerosis: The Silent Killer of American Government* (New York: Random House, 1994).
14. For example, see Aaron Friedberg, "Is the United States Capable of Acting Strategically?" *The Washington Quarterly* 14, 1 (Winter 1991), pp. 15-20.
15. David C. Kozak, "The Bureaucratic Politics Approach: The Evolution of the Paradigm," in *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*, David Kozak and James Keagle, eds. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988), pp. 3-15.
16. John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 89-127; and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1983), pp. 51-52.

17. Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, *Discriminate Deterrence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989).

18. William S. Cohen, *Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, May 1997).