HARNESSING AMERICA'S POWER

A U.S. National Security Structure for the 21st Century

By PETER C. PHILLIPS and CHARLES S. CORCORAN

uccessfully contending with the challenges of the 21st-century environment requires an extensive overhaul of America's national security bureaucracy. In the executive branch, nearly every department has a strategy document citing the need for greater interagency cooperation, but little is being done to facilitate such efforts. Current authority, funding, and oversight structures reward independent stovepiped action rather than interdependent, whole-of-government approaches to national security issues. As a result, cooperation among executive agencies is generally a reactive phenomenon, resulting from a cobbled-together response to crisis, rather than a proactive application of all instruments of national power in a concerted effort to shape the environment in favor of U.S. interests. This article proposes a solution. Specifically, it provides a blueprint for an integrated, agile national security apparatus

with the necessary authority, resources, and oversight to shape the environment and conduct efficient and effective crisis response operations.

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Defining National Security

Despite some minor adjustments, the core organizations and structure of the U.S. national security bureaucracy have remained largely unchanged since their establishment with the signing of the National Security Act of 1947. The system was designed to advance America's national interests, which are gener-

ally defined as physical security, economic prosperity, value preservation at home, and value projection abroad. In the bipolar world of the Cold War, national security policy primarily focused on defending the homeland and major allies from Soviet attack and communist aggression. The doctrine of the day was containment, and the goal was to suppress any problems that arose to prevent escalation. Key players in executing this strategy were the Department of State and Department of Defense (DOD), as well as various intelligence agencies.

Today, while U.S. interests have not changed, the concept of security has evolved. According to a study from the Project on National Security Reform:

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DOD (R.D. Ward)

National security is the capacity of the United States to define, defend, and advance its position in a world characterized by turbulent forces of change. The objectives of national security include—(i) security from aggression against the nation by means of a national capacity to shape the strategic environment; to anticipate and prevent threats; to respond to attacks by defeating enemies; to recover from the effects of attack; and to sustain the costs of defense; (ii) security against massive societal disruption as a result of natural forces, including pandemics, natural disasters and climate change, and serious challenges to our national economic and financial systems; and (iii) security against the failure of major national infrastructure systems by means of building robust systems, defending them, and maintaining the capacity for recovering from damage.2

Shifting from a "suppress and contain" to a "shape and solve" mentality is significant. Suppression is inherently reactive in nature, while the desire to manage and solve problems efficiently and effectively requires a more proactive approach. Cold War problems

could be contained with reactive engagement. Applying a similar mindset to the potential security threats of the 21st century could lead to catastrophe. While it is refreshing to hear the Nation's leaders espouse a proactive approach, the unfortunate reality is that the national security bureaucracy has not kept pace with either the rhetoric or the changing concept of security.

The 21st-century Environment

Although changes in the security landscape are often attributed to the transition from a bipolar to a multipolar world, it is perhaps more appropriate to associate today's challenges with the transition from the industrial to the information age. Stated another way, if the Soviet Union had not collapsed, America would likely still be dealing with the issues it faces as a direct result of globalization. Access to information has led to the erosion of borders and empowerment of individuals and nonstate organizations, including terrorists, organized criminals, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and multinational corporations. Competi-

tion in an increasingly open global market has translated directly into rivalry for scarce energy resources and worldwide reliance on a fragile and vulnerable system of currency and capital flows. Numerous countries are facing demographic challenges, whether from aging populations with long-term care issues or bulging youth populations with limited employment opportunities. In addition, many governments in the developing world struggle to provide the most basic needs, such as food and water, to their citizens. Simply stated, today's environment is exponentially more complex than it was even 10 years ago—and the trend is likely to continue. The most important actors in this complex environment are human beings. Humans make unpredictable choices and as such are the greatest variable in any system. In the bipolar, industrial age world of 1947, there were far fewer human actors operating at the strategic level than there are in today's multipolar, information age world where nearly any individual with Internet access can spur an instant global crisis with the push of a button.

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Given this diverse array of challenges, it could be argued that America's "greatest vulnerability by far is linked to the legitimacy of our leadership" as we attempt to steward the international community through this new array of nontraditional security threats.³ In other words, absent fundamental, systemwide changes to the American national security apparatus, perhaps the greatest threat to America may be America itself.

Instruments of Power

Legitimate leadership requires smart application of all elements of national power. For many years, the acronym DIME (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) has been used to describe the instruments of power. The names of the instruments point directly to the major executive branch actors in power application: State and DOD, as well as the Department of Commerce and intelligence agencies. It is now clear that "the day is past when a single government agency or organization—even one as large as the DOD—can manage a key foreign policy issue."4 While it would be naive to believe U.S. strategists and policymakers do not understand that there is a much wider array of agencies involved in the development and implementation of national security policy, to further legitimize U.S. leadership for the broader audience, a whole-of-government term might better define U.S. instruments of power. For example, the acronym MIDFIELD (military, informational, diplomatic, financial, intelligence, economic, law, and development) conveys a much broader array of options (a much larger tool kit) for the strategist and policymaker to use.

One of the most important additions to this new acronym is the letter *L*. Americans take great pride that their nation is governed by the rule of law: "Our past, and the past of every other nation, tells us that law and war were opposites, two means to resolve differences, one guided by commonly agreed-upon standards of justice, the other resolved by the calculus of power."5 Reaffirming the American commitment to the rule of law by simply adding it to our national security dialogue is a step in the right direction to restoring what Joseph Nye termed soft power, which he defines as the "ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments." Nye contends that soft power "arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When

our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced." Ultimately, it is our policy actions and not our words that will carry the day, but we must begin by expanding our national security vocabulary.

Another important addition to this acronym is the *D* for development. The U.S. Agency for International Development has played an integral role in advancing America's soft power image since its foundation in 1961. Despite the agency's numerous contributions to furthering U.S. interests, until recently it was rarely included in U.S. foreign policy dialogue. However, in the past year, the Secretaries of State and Defense have both renewed the U.S. commitment to the role of development by making it part of their 3D (diplomacy, development, and defense) approach to foreign policy. If American leaders wish to shape today's environment, then development is, without question, a key instrument of national security power.

Geared to Respond

Despite the desire for a proactive, wholeof-government approach to U.S. national security policy, the bureaucracy continues to operate in a reactive, responsive mode. As David Rothkopf noted:

Despite the best efforts of many national security advisors, efforts to establish strategic planning sections within the NSC [National Security Council] have typically faltered. The result is that the general state of mind within this critical institution is one of constant, frenzied reaction. Planning seems not only a luxury, but almost a dereliction of duty given the pressures of the moment. This would be dangerous under any circumstances but it is worse in the absence of basic marching orders of the sort that existed during the Cold War. Leaders must make a commitment to breaking this cycle.⁷

According to the vice chair of the 9/11 Commission, "The interagency process simply does not function well. The NSC is overwhelmed and has underperformed." Whole of government cannot mean everyone develops his own plan and then we come together and decide which way to go. To break free of this cycle, the incentives must change. Success in the organization should equate to finding ways to collaborate, systematically and at the management level, rather than finding ways for "my agency to win." The root causes for

this bureaucratic dysfunction can be traced directly to current authority, funding, and oversight mechanisms that are inherent in the process.

Authority. In the current system, there are two entities in the bureaucracy with the authority to direct interagency efforts: the Chief of Mission (COM) and the Assistant to the President for National Security, more commonly referred to as the National Security Advisor (NSA). Per the Foreign Service Act of 1980, the COM is defined as the "principal officer in charge of a diplomatic mission of the United States or of a United States office abroad which is designated by the Secretary of State as diplomatic in nature, including any individual assigned under section 502(c) to be temporarily in charge of such a mission or office."9 As noted in the State Department Foreign Affairs Manual, "Pursuant to the

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President's letter of instruction, the COM has authority over every executive branch employee in the host country, except those under the command of a U.S. area military commander, or those on the staff of an international organization."¹⁰

Meanwhile, the NSA presides over the National Security Council. According to the National Security Act of 1947, the "function of the Council shall be to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security."

Simply stated, the COM directs tactical-level coordination of the instruments of power within a limited geographic area (except the military instrument), while the NSA directs strategic-level coordination in the meeting rooms of Washington, DC. As the Center for Strategic and International Studies Commission on Smart Power highlights, this model is ineffective: "U.S. foreign policy institutions are fractured and compartmentalized. Coordination, where there is any, happens at either a relatively low level or else at the very highest

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levels of government—both typically in crisis settings that drive out long-range planning. Stove piped institutional cultures inhibit joint action."

The report recommends that the government "realign agency authorities and resources to match agency roles and responsibilities in mission areas ranging from homeland security and combating terrorism to stability operations and combating WMD."

Clearly, the current system does not promote the application of smart power to shape the environment, allow for optimal crisis response operations, or foster strategic thought.

Many challenges require regional approaches and multilateral solutions. A perfect example is the effort to counter the threat posed by the narcotics trade, as well as other illicit trafficking, particularly in the Western Hemisphere. According to a senior DOD official familiar with the issue, "Although strong bilateral relationships with several countries have resulted in tactical successes, strategic victory will be impossible without a comprehensive, region-wide (multi-lateral), whole-of-government

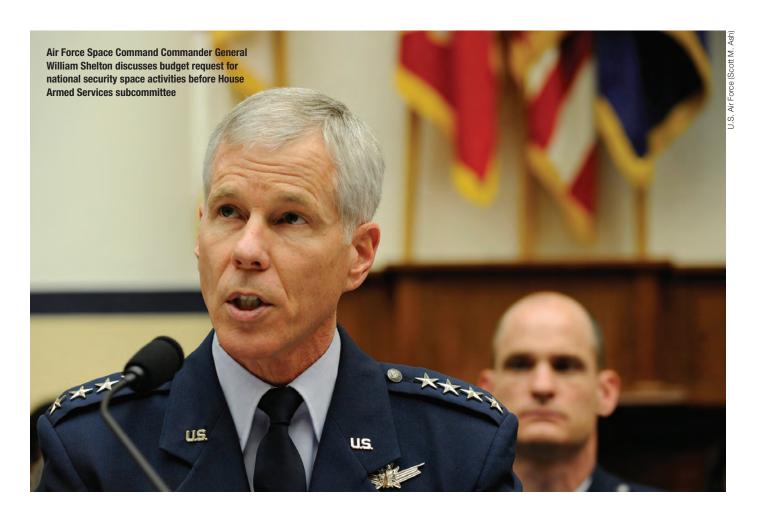
approach to the problem."15 Since regional and multilateral coordination is above the COM authority level, the NSC is left managing dayto-day coordination of interagency efforts to ensure smart power application in concert with national policy directives. In addition to known issues, crisis situations seldom fall within the borders of a single COM's area of responsibility. Even when they do, COMs do not generally have access to sufficient interagency resources to respond independently. Again, in a crisis situation, the NSC is left holding the bag, responsible for managing the response operation. Since the NSC is busy conducting daily policy operations and crisis response, it does not have time to focus on its main purpose of providing strategic-level advice to the President.

There is one executive department that has the all-important middle or operational level of both planning and implementation resources built into its structure: DOD. Organized around regional combatant commands, it is uniquely suited to deal with many of these issues. In U.S. Africa Command's 2010 Posture Statement, General William

Ward did an excellent job stating the case for this missing regional link in the U.S. national security bureaucracy:

Regional cooperation is critical, whether it be neighboring countries working together against mutual threats, or region-wide efforts to establish common security networks, such as the [African Union's] cooperative security architecture. Our approach focuses on mutual interests, fostering interoperability and common situational awareness, regionally-oriented capacity building, and enhancing relationships built on trust and cooperation. The more the countries of Africa work together, the greater the likelihood that the continent will achieve lasting stability. 16

Since the military has this unique structure and accompanying resources in place, it has increasingly been called on to implement nonmilitary policy. Some combatant commanders, recognizing the interagency coordination void at the regional level, have taken steps to improve the situation. Admiral James Stavridis of U.S. European Command



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B-52H Stratofortress carrying X-51A Waverider scramjet taxis to runway for test flight

designated his State Department advisor as his deputy, granting this civilian full authority to direct operations in his regional command. He also established new branches of his staff to coordinate interagency operations (J9) and public-private operations (J10).¹⁷ General Douglas Fraser of U.S. Southern Command has 25 personnel from 13 separate governmental agencies working side by side at Joint Interagency Task Force–South in Miami. As a senior DOD official recently noted, "Everyone in the interagency wants to work together. The strain in the system is due to questions of both authority and funding." ¹⁸

Unfortunately, the increasing use of the military to fill the bureaucratic gap is not lost on outside observers and does not bode well for America's image as a smart powerbroker. As Patrick Stewart noted in his keynote address to the 2009 Humanitarian Summit:

We have seen a trend toward using the DOD's Regional Combatant Commands as platforms for coordinating regional activities of not only the U.S. military but U.S. civilian agencies. This trend is most apparent in the cases of

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U.S. Southern Command and the new U.S. Africa Command. Both Commands are envisioned as having a "shaping" rather than warfighting mission. Their goal is to lead U.S. government efforts in ameliorating the sources of conflict and instability in their regions. 19

Stewart warns this increased use of the military "poses risks to the coherence of U.S. foreign policy, the image of the U.S. abroad, and the sustainability of U.S. efforts to build stable, democratic, and economically prosperous states in the developing world."²⁰ He states, "If not carefully managed, it could distort broader U.S. foreign policy goals by putting a military face on U.S. global engagement; undermine development objectives in target countries; and exacerbate the long-standing imbalance in resources the U.S. currently budgets to military and civilian components of state-building."²¹

Interagency coordination authority is clearly lacking at the regional level, and the military is increasingly called on to fill this void, perhaps to the long-term detriment of U.S. security interests. Simply adding an

intermediate level of interagency coordination to the bureaucracy would not completely solve this issue. To understand the entirety of the problem, one must also examine current funding and oversight practices.

Funding. Competition among various executive agencies for an increasingly limited slice of the budget pie fosters independent, rather than integrated, approaches to solving national security challenges. In "Turning Ideas into Action," the Project on National Security Reform clearly defined the problem: "In the current system, funding is distributed program by program, department by department. In theory, this is designed to produce desired mission outcomes. In practice, however, the process focuses on means rather than ends and relies on policy entrepreneurs within the interagency space to work around the bureaucratic impediments to achieve successful mission outcomes."22

Much like the authority issues addressed already, many of today's funding challenges are a result of the failure to update a bureaucracy put in place following World War II.²³ While this approach may have been

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USCENTCOM Commander General James Mattis is briefed by Soldiers at Patriot missile site in Southwest Asia

appropriate for Cold War policies, it is not an effective way to confront 21st-century issues, and it is certainly not conducive to a whole-of-government, environment-shaping approach to national security policy.²⁴

Funding challenges are exacerbated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Although OMB has an exceptional reputation for responsive, accurate, and impartial work, is no systematic cross-agency process in the White House for giving agencies guidance for applying resource planning to strategic priorities."²⁷

Poor resource allocation decisions compound the authority issues addressed earlier. In fact, "Between 1990 and 2000, while international affairs budgets were shrinking and the Foreign Service was growing smaller by

effective allocation of resources is the single greatest determinant of successful policy execution

it is much like other executive agencies in that its "internal culture does not always promote cross-agency perspectives and knowledge," making it difficult to "carry out true crossagency resource planning on a systematic basis because of stove-piping." While the NSC and OMB work closely together, it is on an ad hoc rather than a statutory or Presidentially directed basis. So 21st-century security issues require cross-agency efforts, but in the current resource allocation scheme, "there

the year, the budgets of the military regional commands grew rapidly. Each of the five area combat commands saw budget increases of at least 35 percent." This growth has led to an increased use of the military for nonmilitary missions to fill the interagency void at the regional level.

To solve this issue, the incentives must change: "According to budgeting experts, the effective allocation of resources is the single greatest determinant of successful policy

execution."²⁹ The United States must adopt a resourcing construct that rewards interagency cooperation to achieve strategic ends. To do so, the branch of government charged with allocating resources and conducting oversight will have to change fundamentally its way of conducting business.

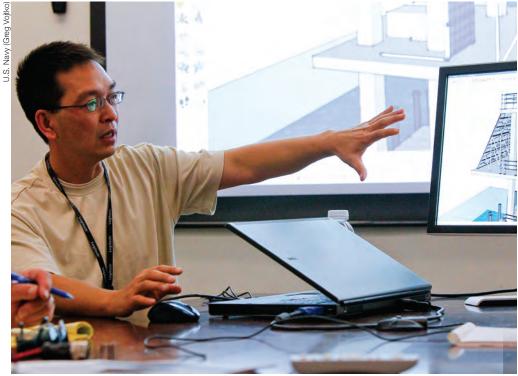
Oversight. Every executive department and agency that receives congressional funding must also answer to Congress. Unfortunately, the current committee structures in the legislative branch foster a stovepiped approach to business in the executive. Each department and agency answers to a different committee or committees, reporting on individual actions and use of allocated resources. No single committee in either the House or Senate has a holistic view of U.S. national security aims. As a result, "little deliberate and regular assessment of policy outcomes occurs, making it difficult to achieve the feedback required to alter flawed strategies, remedy resource shortfalls or build on initial successes. This situation also makes it difficult to hold people accountable for failures or to reward superior performance."30 Current efforts in Afghanistan provide an excellent illustration of the problem:

The Afghanistan situation . . . provide[s] a daily reminder on Capitol Hill of the pronounced need for aligning and integrating strategy and resources. Members of Congress presently struggle to see the big-picture interrelationship among all elements of national power. Instead of structuring itself to catalyze interagency approaches, Congress reinforces outdated, department-centric practices. Existing committees examine the activities of individual departments and agencies, but no one committee has a whole-of-government perspective on national security. It will take aligning congressional structures to 21st-Century challenges to change this. 31

No single agency provides a clearer illustration of the dysfunctional oversight issue than the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). DHS was formed after 9/11, melding together nearly two dozen agencies in order to "better coordinate the government's resources for handling terrorism and other national emergencies." While the executive branch was transforming itself to deal with new realities, Congress proved unwilling to give up any authority. As a result, "DHS gets marching orders from more than 100 committees and

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Engineer presents briefing on selfsustained solar power array for gunnery range microwave relay towers to be installed at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point

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subcommittees—a number that has grown in the past seven years, despite the 9/11 Commission's recommendation to consolidate those tangled lines of authority."³³ Clearly, any meaningful national security reform proposal must include an overhaul of the congressional committee structure to improve the way Congress participates in the process.

A Proposed Solution

By examining the weaknesses and strengths in the current system, we can develop a sound model for reform. Weaknesses include the lack of an authorized interagency leader between the COM and NSA levels, and a stovepiped approach to funding and oversight that promotes individual agency successes rather than overall national security goals. Strength lies in unity of effort and command at the strategic level with the regional combatant command approach to engagement and partnership-building.

Meanwhile, today's environment demands collective regional and multilateral approaches to solve the major security challenges faced by the community of nations. The sum of this analysis lends itself to the following conclusion: the United States must develop a civilian-led interagency structure with the authority, funding, and oversight to act at the regional level.

Regional, civilian-led (Presidential appointees confirmed by the Senate), interagency bureaus charged with applying all U.S. instruments of power, including military, within their geographic area would solve many of the problems with the current system. First, the bureaus would free up the NSA and NSC to focus on national-level strategy. In the current system, the NSA and NSC must coordinate day-to-day interagency operations for everything above the COM level. Regional interagency bureaus could handle most if not all of these duties, including normal shaping and engagement as well as crisis response. Cross-region issues may still require arbitration at the national level, but it would be arbitration with a few highlevel commanders rather than numerous agencies. Second, regional bureaus would require a new method of budgeting. Each region chief would submit a national security budget for his area of responsibility, outlining a holistic view of regional resource application to implement the overall national security strategy. This system would also provide an improved opportunity for congressional

insight on the overall execution of national security strategy.

Implementing this proposal ensures execution of NSC-level decisions through a unified interagency regional command, providing the foundation for unity of effort and a whole-of-government approach on all issues. Simply establishing such a common organizational structure familiar to all participating agencies would likely yield a more efficient process—one in which success would become more dependent on sound policy than the ability of select individuals to overcome institutional parochialism while navigating a maze of bureaucracies.

Specific proposals include that Congress should:

■ mandate alignment of foreign policy actors under regional bureaus (grant regional bureaus authority to execute, as directed by

- direct executive departments to dissolve all regional planning and implementation staffs and work with regional bureaus to integrate former department-level functions in the newly established interagency regional bureaus
- direct NSC to focus on national grand strategy and the regional bureaus to conduct day-to-day implementation of strategy and crisis response within regions
- establish permanent OMB–NSC coordination office on NSC staff responsible for oversight of funding for regional interagency commands.

Critics of such drastic reform would likely point to several areas of concern, including increased size of the bureaucracy, diluted authority for COMs, blurring of the military chain of command, and unsuitability of this model to the homeland security mission. Each of these criticisms deserves further explana-

placing regional staffs from disparate agencies in the same room and on the same team will decrease duplication of effort and free up resources

the President, all foreign policy actions within geographic boundaries; and direct agencies to assume force provider functions for regional bureaus)

- streamline funding of foreign policy by moving execution funding from individual agencies under various authorities to regional bureaus under a single authority for each region
- mandate OMB–NSC collaboration to ensure continuity of resource-policy discussions from administration to administration³⁴
- reorganize congressional committee structures to ensure proper funding and oversight of regional national security bureaus
- mandate professional interagency education and interagency career paths as milestones/promotion requisites for both military and civilian personnel.

Also, the President should:

■ direct the NSC to develop a staffing plan for each regional bureau. Every region, with the exception of North America, should have the same organizational structure. The structure for the North American region requires unique features due to homeland legal issues.

tion. First, this initiative would decrease the overall size of the bureaucracy and make it more integrated and agile. The proposal combines the regional bureaus at the Department of State, DOD, and regional combatant commands, as well as the regional staffs at the NSC. Other agencies or departments, such as some of the military Services, could shed regional staffs as well. Placing regional staffs from disparate agencies in the same room and on the same team will decrease duplication of effort and free up resources.

Critics contend this initiative would dilute the authority of the COM. On the contrary, that authority would not change. The COM would remain the President's representative on the scene and maintain the authority for all interagency activities within the appointed area. No longer will the COM need to report to a regional bureau at the State Department, coordinate interagency issues with various Washington-based agencies, or appeal to the NSC for arbitration of conflicts. Instead, the COM can handle those issues with one phone call to the respective regional interagency chief.

The potential to blur the military chain of command is another concern with this reform. The current chain of command flows

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from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the regional combatant commander. This reform advocates a chain of command from the President to the regional interagency chief to the regional combatant commander, a linkage that maintains civilian control of the military and does not unnecessarily lengthen the chain of command. The Secretary of Defense would still advise the President. Additionally, this structure would likely increase the chance of success because the interagency chief in charge of U.S. strategy for the region would direct the application of military force. For example, such ownership would likely increase interagency involvement in postconflict planning and improve its quality.

Finally, some may argue this model is not adaptable to the U.S. Northern Command region and homeland security mission. This criticism fails to recognize the connection between national security and homeland security, which are, in the age of globalized terror, one and the same. Unique legal aspects and coordination issues of homeland defense must be addressed, but those cannot be impediments to implementing the overall regional interagency system proposed in this article.

This article offers a proposal to restructure the U.S. national security bureaucracy to achieve the tasks our nation has so eloquently outlined on paper but has yet to implement. In the current system, the "basic deficiency is that parochial departmental and agency interests, reinforced by Congress, paralyze the interagency cooperation even as the variety, speed, and complexity of emerging security issues prevent the White House from effectively controlling the system."35 The failure to build a new national security structure leaves the United States with two equally unattractive options. First, continue to react to the world in 20th-century fashion, using hard power, including the use of force, to resolve problems. The likely result of such a course is a continued decline in American soft power, an increasing drain on a severely strained economy, and, in the long run, a less secure America. The second option is to withdraw from the world stage. While this approach may seem more attractive in the short term, particularly given current fiscal constraints, it is also likely to result in a drain of soft power, as well as a long-term security environment that is less favorable to U.S.

interests. The only real choice is clear: the United States must transform the national security bureaucracy to confront today's security challenges.

Change in any organization is difficult, but it is even more so in the politically charged environment of Washington, DC. Reform requires a bipartisan effort as well as congressional and executive leadership. According to the 2010 U.S. National Security Strategy, "Our long-term security will come not from our ability to instill fear in other peoples, but through our capacity to speak to their hopes." Unless and until we reform our national security bureaucracy, we will be unable to achieve such noble strategic security goals. **JFQ**

NOTES

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- ¹⁶ General William Ward, USA, U.S. Africa Command Posture Statement, March 9–10, 2010, 11.
- ¹⁷ Coordinating public-private operations refers to government efforts to coordinate with nongovernmental organizations.
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