

REGIONAL INTERAGENCY COMMANDS: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE FOR COMPLEX OPERATIONS

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USAWC CLASS OF 2010

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Report Documentation Page

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE 30 MAR 2010		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Regional Interagency Commands: A Whole of Government Structure for Complex Operations				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Ian Talbot				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT see attached					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 32	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

REGIONAL INTERAGENCY COMMANDS: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE FOR COMPLEX OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Mr. Ian S. Talbot

TITLE: Regional Interagency Commands: A Whole of Government Structure for Complex Operations

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 25 March 2010 WORD COUNT: 6,375 PAGES: 32

KEY TERMS: Unity of Command, Unity of Effort, Counterinsurgency, Beyond Goldwater-Nichols, National Security Reform, Diplomacy, Defense and Development, Interagency, Complex Operations, Unified Command, National Security Council

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

This research investigates the evolution of the United States Government structures for integrated employment of the instruments of national power with greater unity of effort. Examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the current interagency planning and management mechanisms support the finding that comprehensive national security reform is needed. Reforms are proposed that would create a vertically integrated strategic planning and resourcing process based on greater horizontal integration at regional, joint task force, country and provincial levels. The Africa Command structures of the Department of Defense were examined as a working model of the regional integration proposed. National level reforms include integrated strategic planning with resource balancing that could be implemented within the executive branch but would be best implemented with concurrent legislative reforms. A key element of the proposed reforms is a strengthened and empowered regional-level system of interagency commands with the responsibility and authority to integrate all instruments of national power.

REGIONAL INTERAGENCY COMMANDS: A WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE FOR COMPLEX OPERATIONS

A government ill-executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government ... all men of sense will agree in the necessity of an energetic executive ... the ingredients which constitute energy in the executive are, first, unity; secondly, duration; thirdly, an adequate provision for its support; fourthly, competent powers.

— Alexander Hamilton¹

As the early twenty-first century conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have unfortunately demonstrated, the United States Government (USG) structures for effective integrated use of the diplomatic, information, military and economic instruments of power to support US national interests abroad are inadequate and need reform. Robert Gates, President Obama's Secretary of Defense, while advocating reform before Congress testified:

Over the last 15 years, the USG has tried to meet post-Cold War challenges and pursue twenty-first century objectives with processes and organizations designed in the wake of the Second World War. Operating within this outdated bureaucratic superstructure, the USG has sought to improve interagency planning and cooperation through a variety of means: new legislation, directives, offices, coordinators, “tsars”, authorities, and initiatives with varying degrees of success.²

James Locher, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense under President George H. W. Bush summarizes, "The problem we've been experiencing, whether it's 9/11 or Iraq or Afghanistan in stability operations or in the response to Hurricane Katrina, is that we could not produce that integration across departments and agencies."³ He concludes that “if complex operations are to succeed, the nation must reorient and reform its entire national security system.”⁴

Lieutenant General David Barno, a former commander of US and coalition forces in Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005, describes the need for integration of the civil-military effort beginning with the most senior levels as crucial to success. “Battles are won by soldiers but the much more complex notion of war-winning almost always requires a whole of government approach.” In Afghanistan he advocated a close integration of military and civilian leadership including geographic co-location of leadership, integrated planning with the embassy teams and leveraging of military capacity to drive towards the broader set of whole of government policy objectives.⁵

Prior to the current conflicts the US conducted significant operations in Korea, Vietnam, Grenada and Panama among other locations. Reviews of these conflicts identify many of the same issues that appear to plague the current conflicts. John Fishel in his review of operations in Panama from 1992 concluded:

There is an absolute requirement to articulate political-military strategic objectives in terms of clearly defined end-states.

USG civilian agencies must develop the capability to conceive of strategy in terms of ends, ways, and means. Until such a capability is developed the military will have to take the lead [...]

Unity of effort in the interagency environment can only be achieved if all critical agencies are included in the contingency planning process. Even the combat phase of the contingency plan will require input from State and other agencies but the Civil Military Operations phase will demand very heavy participation, particularly of State, [the] Agency for International Development (AID), Justice, etc.⁶

The challenges of integrating a whole of government approach to foreign affairs and national security are not new. In part some of the issues were fundamentally rooted in the US Constitution and the philosophy of the framers who sought to prevent tyranny by separating the powers of the national government. President Wilson, writing in the

nineteenth century, believed that the US Constitution scheme of dividing power was the cause of many government problems. Wilson wrote, "Power and strict accountability for its use are the essential constituents of good government. [...] It is, therefore, manifestly a radical defect in our federal system that it parcels out power and confuses responsibility as it does."⁷ Wilson was particularly critical of the committee structure of the House of Representatives and felt it would inevitably lead to legislative micromanagement of the executive departments. Today a significant portion of the government's capability to act resides in a multitude of executive departments and agencies with a web of interconnections to legislative committees. Wilson's fears seem to have become reality.

In the twentieth century the foreign policy structures of the USG have been tested and reformed by the accelerating pace of the modern world. World War I would introduce the US to a new place in the world order, something that would not be fully appreciated until the end of World War II. This study will summarize the US foreign affairs apparatus as the interwar years concluded and then focus on the national security structures created by the USG in the aftermath of World War II. Two that remain in current use, the National Security Council and the Department of Defense, will receive particular attention. Experience with the structures during the Cold War led to the reforms of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Analysis of these structures and the reforms that led to them provide evidence of what has worked and clues as to what should be done to further improve USG effectiveness in the kind of complex operations that it seems destined to lead.

Foreign Affairs Prior to World War II

From their earliest history the people of the US have resisted the kind of foreign involvements that often led to wars among the great powers of Europe. Foreign affairs was a low priority among the electorate and the country did not maintain a standing professional army prior to 1945. In general the philosophy was to let other nations resolve their own differences and keep out of their affairs. The US policy of non-interventionism dates from the administration of President Washington and Adams when they sought to avoid involvement in the French Revolutionary Wars. President Jefferson concisely articulated the general principle in his inaugural address of 1801 where he described it as, “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”⁸

The experience of the US with foreign affairs prior to World War II reinforced the non-interventionist policies of the earliest presidents. If drawn into war the country mobilized, fought the necessary battles and de-mobilized. Following the “War to End All Wars” the US population was disappointed in the League of Nations and what was perceived as the general failure of collective security. Many Americans believed that US involvement in World War I had been a horrible mistake and isolationism was a common view. As late as 1940 arguments that the US had no vital interests to protect outside of the Americas had prevailed and the US maintained only a small, regionally-oriented military.⁹

World War II and the Rise of the National Security State

Towards the end of the interwar years in anticipation of the likely build-up to World War II, General George C. Marshall recognized shortcomings in the structure of

the government. A full mobilization seemed inevitable and the USG was not prepared for it. Despite Roosevelt's declaration of a state of emergency in 1939 the USG efforts at mobilization had been ad hoc and uncoordinated. In part this was due to President Roosevelt's deliberately disorganized style.¹⁰ By the spring of 1941, Marshall was convinced that existing plans and organizations would not suffice and ordered new comprehensive plans and strategic estimates to be prepared by his staff.¹¹

Locher writes:

The US entered the Second World War with an archaic organization that was incapable of coordinating land, sea, and air activities across the two military departments, or even of harmonizing business (procurement, logistics, construction, transportation, etc.) efforts within the departments themselves.¹²

In early 1942 to address some of the shortcomings, President Roosevelt created the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) by executive order. The JCS worked well throughout the entire war without legislative sanction. Its membership corresponded to the British Chiefs of the Army, the Navy, and the Royal Air Force. General George C. Marshall was Chief of Staff of the Army. Admiral Ernest J. King was Chief of Naval Operations. General Henry H. Arnold was Chief of the Army Air Corps. To keep the Navy and Army in balance Admiral William D. Leahy was appointed President Roosevelt's special military adviser. The JCS system worked and grew steadily in influence by advising President Roosevelt and coordinating and giving strategic direction. In combination with Prime Minister Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff, the JCS mapped and issued broad strategic direction for both nations.¹³ Locher notes that the JCS "not only had major military responsibilities but also collectively played crucial roles in political, intelligence, and even economic decisions".¹⁴

The established method for inter-service coordination in the interwar years was mutual cooperation. After Pearl Harbor the investigating committee would note that, “the inherent and intolerable weaknesses of command by mutual cooperation were exposed.”¹⁵ Early in the war a consensus had emerged on the need for unity of command in the field.¹⁶ Unified commands were created in each major theater of operations; however, to a great extent the war was fought along service lines. For example in the Pacific General MacArthur reported to General Marshall for operations in the southwest islands but Admiral Nimitz reported to Admiral King for operations in the ocean areas. This division of command responsibilities nearly led to a disaster during the battle of Leyte Gulf.¹⁷

The rivalry between the services during the war was an appreciable handicap to the war effort. Inefficiencies led to efforts by the US Army in 1943 to unify the defense establishment under a single military department but disputes between the Army and Navy were so severe that reorganization was not seriously undertaken until after the war.¹⁸

The worst war in the history of the planet had cost more than 50 million lives, including more than 400,000 US service men and women, and left large parts of the world utterly destroyed. In the eyes of many, US isolationism and non-interventionist sentiments had contributed to the disaster and change was needed. As the leader of the victors the US had emerged as the predominant military and economic power and had assumed a role in the new world order that now clearly included world-wide responsibilities. By design the framers had created structures within the USG that now seemed inadequate for managing the new world order. The creative leadership of men

like General Marshall overcame many of the shortcomings but by the end of the war President Truman recognized that permanent reforms were necessary to institutionalize the successes and correct the deficiencies.

Aftermath of World War II

The depth and scope of the internal and international reform that followed the war were remarkable. By 1953, the US and allies had created the United Nations and signed its Charter, implemented the Marshall Plan, committed themselves to the North Atlantic Alliance, created the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In addition to creating the structure of an international community supportive of its values the US completely “transformed its national security apparatus modernizing its military and creating the Department of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the US Air Force and two powerful new agencies to focus on ensuring successful management of world affairs: the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council.”¹⁹

This transformation of the national security apparatus did not come easily. After the war, heated debates ensued regarding unification of the military into a single organization. President Truman favored unification. The Navy and their allies in the Congress were opposed. “Arguments that unification threatened civilian control over the military soon dominated the debate.”²⁰

General Dwight Eisenhower was one of the first to recognize the need for joint unified commands in the modern world. His experience commanding army, navy and air forces in major coalition operations was unique at the time. He became an advocate for the doctrine of unity of command to achieve unity of effort during the war. In 1946 he was successful in gaining President Truman's authorization for the first unified

command plan establishing unity in various theaters. It would take until 1958 during Eisenhower's second term as President for his vision of chain of command to extend from the President through the Secretary of Defense to the theater commander as it does today.²¹

The National Security Act of 1947 took two years of studies, debates and political maneuvering before being signed into law by President Truman. Despite its compromises it was one of the most significant and far-reaching pieces of legislation ever devised. This legislation merged the Department of War and the Department of Navy into the National Military Establishment, later renamed the Department of Defense, and established the National Security Council (NSC) and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Together with the subsequent reform legislation enacted in 1949 and 1958, the National Security Act institutionalized the successful war time Joint Chiefs of Staff for the management and coordination of joint operations involving land, naval and air forces and firmly established the doctrine of unified command. A compromise structure for consolidating the War and Navy departments within an overarching Defense Department was adopted to improve military efficiency and preserve civilian control of the military command structure. These reforms would largely survive without major changes for nearly 30 years until the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

The most significant among the reforms with respect to integrating the foreign policy efforts of the entire USG was the creation of the National Security Council. It was established "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.”²² The NSC structure has become the senior-level interagency coordination structure within the USG or what David Rothkopf called the “most powerful committee in the history of the world.”²³

As significant as the new council was to become, it has not been consistently understood nor used by the Presidents it has served. Understanding its evolution and struggle with its mandate in the modern world is critical for developing solutions for the problems. These areas will be the subject of the subsequent sections of this paper.

Evolution of the National Security Council

Since the creation of the NSC, its structure and function have depended upon the interpersonal relationships between the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the National Security Advisor and a few other department heads. The first NSC was stood up under the Truman administration and took an informal form. It was criticized for not meeting its coordination mandate.²⁴

Dwight Eisenhower's election as President marked a significant change in the organization and function of the NSC. General Eisenhower had an extraordinary amount of leadership experience in defense and foreign policy. Candidate Eisenhower had been critical of Truman's approach to managing national security and even before his inauguration he had selected Robert Cutler to serve in a newly created position as the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs – the first National Security Advisor. This advisor was a member of the executive office of the President

and therefore not subject to senate confirmation or recall. Eisenhower introduced Cutler as a central player with cabinet stature, a precedent that continues to this day.²⁵

Cutler's first task was to prepare a detailed analysis of the NSC and make recommendations. He began by talking to those who had played key roles during the formation of the new national security apparatus during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, including George Marshall and Ferdinand Eberstadt. Cutler proposed a series of sweeping changes that were intended to provide an organized, dependable and systematic staff system for advising Eisenhower.²⁶ The NSC was extensively transformed by Cutler "from a loosely organized entity into a formal system with an elaborate network of committees and staff arrangements."²⁷

The core of the Eisenhower NSC was the Planning Board made up of assistant secretary-level representatives and chaired by Cutler. Its purpose was to gather the policy positions from the departments and subject them to what Cutler called an "acid bath." The board was instructed not to force consensus but to develop all positions for debate. It pushed ideas up the "policy hill" to the principals, laying out the thinking of the best minds from the agencies, their differences and what policy questions the President needed to resolve.²⁸

Once policy was determined by the President, it was passed to the Operations Coordinating Board chaired by the Under Secretary of State and including Deputy or Under Secretary-level representatives from the other departments. Its purpose was to ensure the implementation of policy. It formed the "down hill slope of the policy hill". Cutler was active on both boards to ensure that they worked in a disciplined way.²⁹

The Eisenhower administration's approach to developing national security strategy may be the best example of long-term planning in American history. In 1953 as the Cold War was emerging from the aftermath of World War II, President Eisenhower initiated Project Solarium to explore the threat posed by the Soviet Union and develop the appropriate strategy. Separate planning teams were formed to develop different courses of action for presentation and consideration by his senior advisors. This effort led directly to the National Security Policy of 1953, which solidified the key pillars of US strategy throughout the Cold War.³⁰

President Kennedy did not share President Eisenhower's experience or preference for formal staff procedures and dismantled much of the NSC structure established by Eisenhower including the planning board and the operations coordinating board. The NSC increasingly focused on crisis management. The Johnson administration used the NSC even less, relying instead on the State Department or ad hoc groups to develop and coordinate policy. By 1969, the NSC existed largely in name only.³¹

While subsequent administrations would restore some of the structure of the NSC and use it more effectively, none would repair the deficiencies created by the dismantling of the Eisenhower system. Michele Flournoy, now President Obama's Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, wrote, "The Eisenhower administration was, in fact, the only one to create and maintain such a clear division between long-term planning and daily operations" in the NSC "and the failure to keep such a division was perhaps the most consequential organizational mistake committed by every subsequent administration."³²

Problems with Interagency Coordination

Writing in the mid-1980's, David Jones, a retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, summed up the deficiencies in the defense establishment in part with the following:

- strategy is so all-encompassing as to mean all things to all men
- leaders are inevitably captives of the urgent, and long-range planning is too often neglected
- authority and responsibility are badly diffused
- rigorous examination of requirements and alternatives is not made
- discipline is lacking in the budget process
- tough decisions are avoided³³

While General Jones' observations were specifically based on the Defense Department of his day, they remain valid criticism of the overall interagency system of today. While subsequent defense reforms such as Goldwater-Nichols addressed some of these issues within Defense, those limited successes now create a striking contrast that illuminates even more clearly the continuing problems of interagency planning and coordination. The glaring contrast between the efficiency and effectiveness of the joint combat operations phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom led by the Defense Department and the poorly planned and executed stability and reconstruction phase involving the interagency is an unfortunate example.³⁴

John Deutch, Director of Central Intelligence for President Clinton and Brent Scowcroft, National Security Advisor for Presidents Ford and George H. W. Bush, writing in 2000 concluded that the NSC, "does not do a good job of planning, budgeting, or coordinating programs that require integrated, sustained effort by several agencies."³⁵ This is not that surprising since the established method for interagency

coordination is principally mutual cooperation with arbitration by the NSC and the President despite “the inherent and intolerable weaknesses of command by mutual cooperation” established in the 1940s.³⁶

From the time the Kennedy administration eliminated the Eisenhower staff structures, the NSC has not given a high priority to strategic planning or to the alignment of resources to implement those plans. The USG “currently lacks both the incentives and the capacity to support strategic thinking and long-range planning in the national security arena.”³⁷ Furthermore, “existing processes for ensuring that agencies actually allocate resources to reflect national security policy priorities are weak”³⁸ and neither the Bush Administration nor the Obama Administrations have addressed the need for a dedicated long-term planning capability for the foreign and security policy issues such as economic development and foreign assistance, support to fragile states, global health factors, the environment, climate change, or energy and resources.³⁹

Finally, aside from some Office of Management Budget (OMB) involvement in the Principals and Deputies Committees, the NSC structure does not integrate resource planning and execution into policy implementation effectively. “The current process and organization are not capable of carrying out common multi-year program planning for critical interagency efforts.”⁴⁰ Adams writes, “without close attention to integration, much of the strategic planning that happens at NSC will be meaningless, because it has not been built into resource (human and fiscal) guidance to the national security agencies.”⁴¹

Clearly the NSC as the principal interagency coordination point must play a greater role in strategic planning and the coordination of national security policy

execution. Ironically, the Goldwater-Nichols reforms in the 1980s and 1990s addressed similar issues within the Department of Defense and may provide a useful model for addressing the interagency coordination challenges of the twenty-first century.

Goldwater-Nichols: A Model for the Interagency?

Since the creation of the Department of Defense, the authorities and responsibilities of the department have been dispersed among the Secretary of Defense, the Service Chiefs, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Unified Commanders. The original statutes sought to maintain civilian control of the military within an efficient military command system while developing and providing sound military advice on the use of the armed forces.

A series of operational failures in the field including Vietnam, the failed attempt to rescue the American hostages in Iran in 1980, the bombing of the embassy and Marine Corps barracks in Beirut in 1983, and the inter-service coordination issues seen in Grenada in 1983, coupled with General Jones public criticism of the Department of Defense before and after his retirement from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, convinced Congress that defense sector reform was needed. Despite significant resistance from the Department of Defense and more than four years of hearings, Congress passed and President Reagan signed the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, one of the most significant military reforms in US history.⁴²

By enacting Goldwater-Nichols, Congress sought to enhance the effectiveness of the military by improving management within the Department of Defense by strengthening civilian authority, improving the military advice provided to the civilian leadership, clarifying the responsibilities and authorities of the commanders of the

unified and specified combatant commands, and increasing attention to the formulation of strategy and contingency planning.⁴³ The last two aspects offer a model for our consideration.

Unified Action and the Rise of the Unified Commander

Goldwater-Nichols settled the struggle for command and control of the deployed military forces, establishing unity of command and a clear chain of command to the President. Service chiefs are to provide the forces but no longer command their operations. The success of Operation Desert Storm would clearly demonstrate this aspect of Goldwater-Nichols. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the JCS participated in detailed review of contingency plans but they were no longer in the operational chain of command. After Goldwater-Nichols the Unified Commander now had the authorities to go along with the responsibilities.⁴⁴

The law established unity of command over all assigned military forces operating within the area of responsibility. The same unity that Hamilton spoke about as vital to leading a government and that Eisenhower sought for leading the operational military in 1958 had finally become a statutory mandate. Unity of command had grown from an established principle of war into common practice within the US military, at least for combat operations. "Command is central to all military action, and unity of command is central to unity of effort."⁴⁵

In Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, military operations largely vanquished all opposition and the international community began efforts to stabilize the country and allow time for a new government to form. Uncoordinated efforts by many well meaning governments and non-governmental organizations were not effective at preventing a

deterioration of the security situation in 2004 and 2005. According to Major General Michael Tucker, Chief of Operations in Afghanistan in 2008, a key problem was the “cross integration of stove piped efforts” or in other words lack of unity of effort.⁴⁶

Can unity of effort be consistently accomplished without unity of command? US Joint Operations doctrine defines unified action as the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort.⁴⁷ This doctrine of mutual cooperation implies that unity of effort can be achieved without unity of command, but can it be achieved reliably and effectively? History seems rich with examples that it is exceedingly difficult if not impossible to consistently deliver the unity of effort required to be successful in complex operations through mutual cooperation alone.

NSC Committees	DoD Commands	DoS Political Bureaus	USAID Regions
Western Hemisphere	NORTHCOM	Western Hemisphere	
	SOUTHCOM		Latin America and the Caribbean
European	EUCOM	European and Eurasian	Europe and Eurasia
Russia and Eurasia			
African Affairs	AFRICOM	African Affairs	Sub-Saharan Africa
		Near Eastern	Middle East
Iraq & Afghanistan	CENTCOM	South and Central Asian	Asia
South and Cent Asia			
East Asian	PACOM	East Asian and Pacific	

Table 1. Differences in Geographic Boundaries in USG Structures Complicate Unity of Effort

Unified action is impeded by a number of factors within the USG. Not the least among them are institutional barriers to coordination such as the lack of common

communication systems and geographical areas of responsibilities. Many of the elements of the USG charged with implementing foreign policy are organized geographically. Unfortunately they are organized in different ways. This situation complicates rather than facilitates interagency coordination. For example, Afghanistan is included in Central Command as is Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, yet two State Department Bureaus are responsible for these areas, Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Planning and operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan routinely involve coordination between two Unified Commands, three State Department Bureaus and two or more ambassadors. Table 1 depicts the different regional boundaries of the NSC, the Defense Department, the State Department and USAID.

What seems clear from experiences in Afghanistan is that counterinsurgency operations are complex and greater unity of effort is required than can be achieved solely through mutual cooperation. There are relatively easy fixes for some of these challenges; others require deeper study and difficult compromises.

Observations and Recommendations

Taken individually the US has some of the greatest instruments of national power ever seen. Planning and coordinating the collective efforts of those instruments has proven to be challenging. Despite US successes, a number of clear and recent failures to coordinate the interagency effort to maximum effect have highlighted the need for fundamental change at all levels. At the national level changes are needed in the legislative and executive branches to integrate and improve strategic policy making, planning and resourcing. At the regional level the success of the military's unified command system needs to be expanded to include all USG agencies operating within

the region with streamlined and effective structures. At the country level where current embassy-based structures may exist and may function well under some conditions, mechanisms are needed to better integrate all USG activities including military organizations. Finally at the provincial level in countries where stability operations are required, integrated civilian-military structures are needed.

It is critical that all levels of leadership be informed by the strategic objectives to ensure that what needs to be accomplished strategically is in fact accomplished with the tactics in use on the ground. Strategy must drive tactics. General Stanley McCrystal, Commander International Security Assistance Force Afghanistan, provides an excellent illustrative example in his counterinsurgency training guidance: “Every interaction with the population, whether positive or negative influences the Afghans' perceptions of ISAF. Our overly-aggressive driving alienates local citizens and potentially drives them into the arms of the insurgency.”⁴⁸ The US must organize and coordinate more effectively at all levels to achieve strategic success.

National: Executive Branch Reform

James Jones, National Security Advisor for President Obama, stated in 2009 that the NSC “must be transformed to meet the realities of the new century.”⁴⁹ As Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrated, delegating the integration of action to the departments does not work. Effective fusion of all elements of national power is required to overcome our current challenges in Afghanistan and to prepare for the future. More effective monitoring of interagency operations to ensure accountability for activities other than the current crisis is necessary. Development of national security professionals with broad knowledge of the multiple instruments of national power and

interagency experience as envisioned by Executive Order 13434 is a critical enabler.⁵⁰

At the most senior levels, these personnel should work within the departments while supporting the NSC with their primary focus being integration, or within the Regional Interagency Commands as described below.

The NSC must be expanded to the point where it can effectively guide long-term strategic planning for the entire national security system. The persistent complex world-wide operations required to defeat modern threats demand it. An examination of the Eisenhower-era NSC staff structures yields potential solutions to many of the systemic organizational challenges preventing effective national security strategic planning and implementation. A separation of crisis monitoring/operations and strategic planning is needed. Regional strategic plans should be developed that integrate all the elements of national power for accomplishing national-level strategic objectives for USG operations within a region. These plans should be informed by sub-regional and country-level planning that reflects approved priorities at each level. Ideally these plans would be sufficiently robust to accommodate many crisis operations. At each level to the maximum degree possible the superior plan should describe the specific effects or outcomes, the “ends” desired, with guidelines for establishing accountability. Each subordinate plan should prioritize the multiple lines of effort and identify in increasing levels of detail the activities and durations needed, the “how”, and the resources required from the various departments to deliver the desired outcomes.

Finally all plans must be reconciled with the authorized resources to establish realistic expectations. There is little benefit in planning an elaborate course of action to achieve any goal, no matter how laudable, if adequate resources are never applied. An

integrated national security budget corresponding to the hierarchy of plans is critically needed. Long-term strategic objectives should be supported with long-term funding while providing the regional leadership with adequate authority for reprogramming. The current planning-authorizing cycle time is clearly not optimal and should be lengthened as the planning element is improved. The hierarchy of plans should be structured to provide the greatest flexibility at the lowest possible level to adjust to contingencies with accountability for results. The executive branch can accomplish a great deal with improvements to integrated planning but legislative reform is also necessary.

National: Legislative and Constitutional Reforms

As foreshadowed by the thinkers of the progressive era, President Wilson among them, the US has become an “administrative state.” To an increasing degree the USG is struggling with a “maldistribution of power [and] the mixing and confusing of governmental functions.” The interference of Congress in the execution of national policy essentially through micromanagement of the federal bureaucracy is at the heart of the problem. Congress, through the action of the committee system that Wilson was so very critical of, is a clear impediment to good governance. For the federalists separating the powers was “primarily designed to elicit sound and deliberate legislation [and] a firm and energetic executive [...]” By defining how the bureaucracy will accomplish the national objectives while simultaneously controlling the funding, Congress creates a great deal of the dysfunction of the executive branch.⁵¹

As currently established the national security system also lacks the “agility required to protect the US and its interests in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.”⁵² To a large degree the individual departments combine with the

subcommittees that appropriate their funding and authorize their activities to create stove pipes of interest that protect their jurisdictions and prerogatives rather than seek an effective integration of the instruments of power necessary to achieve US policy. The exacerbating effects of partisan politics as seen toward the end of both the Clinton and Bush administrations, and its paralyzing effect on US foreign policy, serve to illustrate the dysfunction possible within the US system. This dysfunction provides a critical vulnerability for exploitation. To resolve these issues legislative reform of the committee system is necessary.

Participation by Congress in national-level strategic planning is vital to set the broad strategic vision supported by the people. But a decentralized and empowered leadership must also be established within the executive to wield the instruments of power with the agility required by the modern world.

Operational Level: Regional Reforms

Experience in the current conflicts demonstrates that the organizational structure led by regional USAID directors, State Department bureau chiefs, ambassadors and geographic combatant commanders will not consistently be able to accomplish the needed unity of effort. Integrated and regionally-focused interagency planning and execution requires greater unity of command to achieve effective unity of effort in complex operations. Enabling structural reform is needed.

The first step is for the President to form one or more Interagency Policy Committees to develop common geographic partitions for use by all the agencies of the USG. Standardizing the regional boundaries of the various departments will reduce coordination requirements and facilitate integration of regional elements of national

power. An interagency coordination group should be able to arrive at a standard in short order once directed to do so.

The second step is for the President to establish an Unified Interagency Command Plan analogous to the Unified Command Plan.⁵³ This plan would establish regional organizations headed by a civilian director or a four-star level military officer. This director or commander would be a Senate-confirmed Presidential nominee with the authorities and responsibilities appropriate for directing all instruments of national power within the region. Each Regional Interagency Command (RIC) would have deputies for the diplomatic, intelligence, information, military and economic elements of power similar to the structures that are being piloted by AFRICOM.⁵⁴ These deputies would be qualified national security professionals and direct or command all USG personnel within the region. They would be co-located within their region, reporting to the RIC commander or director. All personnel assigned to country teams or Joint Interagency Task Forces would be under the operational control of a RIC and the administrative control of their Department. The military deputy would assume the current role of Geographic Combatant Commander with similar reporting relationships. The Chief of Mission for each embassy would report to the diplomatic deputy. Each of the deputies would have an administrative relationship with an executive department or element of the NSC; for example, the deputy for USAID would coordinate with the Agency for International Development.

Establishing a RIC and co-locating the senior leadership of State, Defense and USAID at an interagency headquarters would greatly facilitate strategic planning and implementation of US policy for the region, thereby integrating leadership for all

elements of national power with the goal of achieving unity of effort. Joint Interagency Task Forces would be established under the leadership of a senior commander or director reporting to the RIC as appropriate to the task. Appropriate operational, administrative and tactical control channels would be established in ways similar to the mechanisms in use in the current Unified Commands.

Conclusions

Alexander Hamilton spoke clearly about what characteristics were needed for an effective organization executing national policy. First among Hamilton's characteristics was unity. Modern worldwide complex operations now require an agility that can only be satisfied with de-centralized command and control. Integrated and empowered structures with clear national policies can implement that agility and achieve unity of effort but they must have unity of command over USG activities to be reliable and accountable.

Second among Hamilton's characteristics was duration. Globalization makes it a US national interest to support a stable international community that can foster the entire world's "pursuit of happiness." This requires a long-term, sustained employment of national instruments that must be driven by integrated national policies and strategies. Achieving this duration will require longer-term strategic planning by all elements of the executive branch reconciled with available resources.

Third among Hamilton's characteristics was support. The legislative branch must provide sufficient resources for the top national priorities at the expense of others. Congress must refocus its activity on the strategic national policy issues and away from the details of implementation. Presidential leadership must guide a debate among

those key issues to arrive at guidance that is driven by national values and interests. Legislators must seek to educate and inform the electorate about the factors that bear on these issues without obfuscation and partisan exploitation.

Hamilton's final characteristic was competent powers. Perhaps the most vital of the characteristics is the selection of people with the knowledge and skills to accept empowerment and act effectively with the agility required. These people exist with the USG and our current organizations are overly reliant on them for success. Unfortunately those same organizations seem woefully ineffective at producing people in the quantities required.

The United States Government structures are inadequate for making effective integrated use of the diplomatic, information, military and economic instruments of power to support US national interests abroad. This study proposes reforms that would create a vertically-integrated strategic planning and resourcing process based on greater horizontal integration at regional, joint task force, country and provincial levels managed by an expanded NSC with Eisenhower-era structures. Concurrent legislative reforms are necessary to improve resourcing and operational agility. The operational components of State and Defense would be assigned to empowered Regional Interagency Commands modeled on the Unified Command Plan that would establish unity of command and improve the unity of effort that has been lacking in recent US operations. These reforms are aimed at improving the US national security structures vitally needed for complex operations in the modern world. Although specific details may require further debate this study concludes that reform is required.

Endnotes

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