

Strategy Research Project

The Challenge of Unified Action in Shaping the Strategic Environment

by

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United States Army War College
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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Diplomacy, development and defense form the three primary pillars of US foreign policy used to “engage” and “shape” a global strategic environment. Over the past decade, a variety of critics have noted the lack of US interagency coordination in its international engagement and shaping efforts. This paper contends that although formal interagency structures and processes have improved and do exist at the national and country team level, the lack of an authoritative interagency mechanism at the regional level inhibits unified action in the conduct of shaping operations. To develop this argument, this paper focuses on the challenges of policy development, and subsequent implementation at our US Missions abroad. This paper highlights attempts to improve interagency collaboration and recommends potential courses of action. Recommendations include: a reconfiguration of the Unified Command Plan from a DoD-centric, to an NSC-lite centric organization, a revamped approach to planning at the Embassy level, and consideration of an interagency “Goldwater-Nichols Act.”

The Challenge of Unified Action in Shaping the Strategic Environment

National renewal and global leadership are cornerstones of the 2010 National Security Strategy.¹ While national renewal primarily addresses economic recovery, global leadership calls for collective action to “shape an international system that can meet the challenges of our time.”² Such challenges not only include terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and war, but also include inequality, economic instability, environmental destruction, food security and dangers to public health.³ Hence, the need to collectively engage, develop, and shape the international community is more important now than arguably at any time in our nation’s history.

In attempting to fulfill this stated NSS objective, mission focused USG departments and agencies have sought to coordinate and increase their international “shaping” and “engagement” operations. For the U.S. Department of State (DoS) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) this equates to “diplomacy” and “development.” Although DoS and USAID may be the lead federal agencies in this area, they are not the only stakeholders or players.⁴ All federal agencies play a role in US foreign relations and in shaping the global strategic environment with or without foreign assistance funding. Our collective global interactions, even at the tactical and operational level, have a shaping effect on the state and non-state actors with which we engage. Beyond DoS and USAID, the most notable player is the US Department of Defense (DoD), which refers to such activities as “Phase 0 Operations”⁵ and uses the phrase “unified action” to describe the synergistic use of national power for a specified end-state.⁶

Diplomacy, development and defense (increasingly referred to as the 3D’s) form the three primary pillars of US foreign policy.⁷ The 3Ds are used to “engage” and

“shape” a global strategic environment in pursuit of the vision provided in the National Security Strategy. Over the past decade, a host of think tanks, academia, legislators and policy makers have expressed concern over the imbalance of our 3D efforts. Much of the debate stems from our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq,⁸ but is in fact much broader and includes the perceived militarization of US foreign policy. In response to such criticism, executive and legislative action has led to positive steps toward improving interagency coordination.⁹ Nevertheless, the coordinated interagency projection of our national power to shape the strategic environment remains deficient.

Despite our best efforts, we are not organized as an interagency community to allow for effective engagement and shaping required by the 2010 National Security Strategy. Although formal interagency structures and processes exist at the national and country team level, the lack of an authoritative interagency mechanism at the regional level inhibits unified action in the conduct of shaping operations. To develop this argument, this paper focuses on the challenges of policy development, and subsequent implementation at our US Missions abroad.¹⁰ This paper explains several remedial attempts to improve interagency collaboration at the operational level and recommends several potential courses of action. Specific recommendations include:

- A reconfiguration of the Unified Command Plan from a DoD-centric, to an NSC-lite centric organization.
- A revamped approach to planning at the Embassy level to ensure regional unity of effort.
- Legislative consideration for a new “Goldwater-Nichols Act”¹¹ to guarantee interagency “unified action”

Policy Development and Implementation Challenge

National security policy begins with the President of the United States. President Obama clearly outlines in his opening letter in the 2010 National Security Strategy the need for increased U.S. international engagement and leadership. Beyond strengthening traditional alliances, President Obama seeks to utilize national influence to build “new and deeper partnerships in every region, and strengthen international standards and institutions.”¹² He adds, “engagement is no end in itself,” and provides a vision of the global community/strategic community that our engagement/influence seeks to shape. Specifically:

The international order we seek is one that can resolve the challenges of our times – countering violent extremism and insurgency; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials; combatting a changing climate and sustaining global growth; helping countries feed themselves and care for the sick; resolving and preventing conflict, while also healing its wounds.”¹³

The pursuit of such an international order requires the collective utilization of US national power, prestige and influence both in and outside of government. This is especially true given today’s volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) global strategic environment.

Indeed, most key international strategic estimates portray an era of persistent conflict that will last for the foreseeable future.¹⁴ As implied in the NSS, such an environment necessitates a continual application of national power and influence through unified action on friends and foe alike in order to pursue our core national interests. Short of unforeseen contingencies, the preponderance of this national power¹⁵ projection occurs during times of relative peace through our use of diplomacy, development and defense. More succinctly, unified action is required during the conduct

of shaping operations to achieve national objectives. The policy and implementation challenge is to apply the correct amount of national power in the correct interagency ratio¹⁶ to allow for the required “comprehensive engagement” required in the National Security Strategy.

The National Security Strategy serves as the base document of US national security and foreign policy. U.S. Presidents since 1947 have utilized the National Security Council (NSC) in varying degrees of effectiveness to develop and oversee the implementation of national security and foreign policy directives.¹⁷ Since President Eisenhower, subsequent administrations have struggled to horizontally integrate the interagency elements “from the NSC staff to the country teams in the field.”¹⁸ Despite NSC policy development over the past five decades, the interagency community has struggled to efficiently coalesce national power through unified action at the country team level. The 2009 Project on National Security Reform cites several endemic structural problems that lead to this inefficiency. They include:

- 1) Current national security interagency system does not facilitate horizontal coordination;
- 2) There is little deliberate and regular assessment of policy outcomes that minimizes constructive feedback;
- 3) Lack of alignment among agencies and departments on what constitutes national security challenges and opportunities means;
- 4) Weak integrating structures are dominated by strong functional areas, which lead to competitive discussion versus constructive dialogue;
- 5) Strong functional organizations control and often thwart policy implementation;
- 6) The system is unable to resource the full range of required capabilities for national priority missions;

7) Weak integrating structures and presidential delegation recur at the regional level;

8) Country-level unity of purpose and effort is limited by perception by embassy staff that ambassadors and chiefs of mission (COMs) act like State department rather than presidential representatives;

9) Ineffective interagency mechanisms confuse multilateral actors and permit departments and agencies the discretion to interpret U.S. policy and strategy;

10) Implementation of interagency policy is poorly integrated and resourced. Authorities and appropriations flow through traditional departments and agencies making interagency implementation rare.¹⁹

The NSC must contend with two significant process challenges that contribute to these shortcomings.

The first is a result of the current global VUCA environment and the sheer volume of activities the NSC must manage on a day-to-day basis. Although the NSC consists of the principal leaders of our most powerful and influential governmental departments and agencies (DoS, DoD etc.), the world is a very busy place and it is virtually impossible for these senior leaders to maintain a continual situational awareness on the entirety of global affairs to allow for informed decisions.²⁰ As stated by Michelle Flournoy, much of their time is consumed by the “tyranny of the inbox” that “often becomes the tyranny of managing today’s crises.”²¹ In her 2006 article “Strategic Planning for National Security: A New Project Solarium,” Ms. Flournoy advocated for a development of an interagency national security strategy that included implementation, budget and assessment instructions in order to correct the NSC deficiencies experienced since the Eisenhower administration.²²

Although the interagency has taken great steps since 2006, as of 2012, no such interagency long-term strategic planning mechanism exists. Similar to previous

Administrations, President Obama established the NSC as “the principal forum for consideration of national security policy issues requiring Presidential determination.”²³

The President’s broad sweeping NSS remains the key document by which departments and agencies derive organizational priorities. The lack of significant lower level holistic interagency strategic planning hinders unified action in shaping operations.²⁴

Of course, each of the principals commands significant staffs that facilitate issue tracking and NSC level discussions. Much of the regional policy discussions occur at the Interagency Planning Committee (IPC) level; however, these are beltway discussions, not all-inclusive, and many of the invited participants advocate organizational versus national interests.²⁵ The point here is not to disparage NSC decision-making ability, rather to reinforce the enormity of effort required in developing national level policy, let alone conduct strategic planning and implementation follow on more than a handful of priority issues.

As a result, NSC guidance regarding “comprehensive engagement” and “shaping” is at best broad for specific high priority countries and at worst non-existent for countries in lower priority regions. Beyond the National Security Strategy, the next time a country specific “whole of government” document is produced is at the country level. US Ambassadors serving in US Missions abroad are responsible for developing a three year “Integrated Country Strategy” from disparate members of the “country team” each with varying resources and agendas.²⁶ Some Ambassadors do this well while others do not.²⁷ Short of the country team level, individual agencies are responsible for deriving and interpreting policy guidance “in collaboration with,” but not necessarily beholden to other agencies.²⁸ Most of the subsequent interagency problems arise from

the gap created by lack of capacity or integration between the national and country team level.²⁹

This is due to a significant amount of bureaucratic distance from policy inception to implementation that leads to policy, budgeting and programing dissonance. As individual agencies develop strategic plans in pursuit of national policy they may consider the other interagency stakeholders, but ultimately need to develop plans utilizing their core competencies. This allows slightly different interpretations and direction of strategic level policy guidance by the organizations represented in the NSC and especially during the conduct of shaping operations. For DoD, DoS, and USAID the tendency will be for each to interpret policy, develop strategies, and advocate for resources from the viewpoint of their core competencies' of defense, diplomacy or development. By the time departments and agencies receive direction and resources at the country team level, the whole of government approach developed at the NSC may no longer be aligned.

To make this case, this paper will evaluate policy and planning guidance from the national level to the point of application at the numerous US Embassies throughout the world. The DoS and USAID are the clear and mandated lead for implementation of US foreign policy to include diplomatic and developmental efforts abroad. Nevertheless, "oversight and direction are not equivalent to coordination."³⁰ Furthermore, given the current global strategic environment, all elements of national power are stakeholders and each has vested organizational mission requirements also stemming from the NSS and NSC guidance. Each organization interprets the National Security Strategy according to its own derived mission, budgetary goals and institutional objectives. Each

organization then interprets and develops supporting strategies/directives through multiple layers of bureaucracy down to implementation at the individual country level. The US Ambassador, as the President's direct representative, is subsequently charged to coalesce potentially unaligned individual agency efforts to ensure compliance with national strategic direction.³¹

The greatest example of the potential for policy and programming dissonance is seen through the DoD. The DoD at its highest organizational level derives its mission from the National Security Strategy to develop multiple defense related documents citing the need to engage, build partnerships, and provide security and defense. Principal among these are the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the National Military Strategy (NMS), the Guidance for the Employment of Force (GEF) and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP).³²

The Combatant Commands subsequently develop their own plans that are then supported by plans from the services. Joint Doctrine calls for Geographical Combatant Commands (GCC) to coordinate their security cooperation plans with interagency stakeholders as soon as possible in the planning process to ensure unity of effort; however, there is no legal mechanism to ensure this occurs.³³ Combatant Command Plans then provide direction to Embassy security cooperation officers (SCO) who are responsible for integrating DoD goals/objectives into the Embassy Integrated Country Strategy, which is also referred to as the Ambassador's plan. By the time the SCO receives Combatant Command direction, several staffs at varying levels have interpreted guidance and provided input allowing for potential dissonance from initial national level guidance. Interagency contributions to the GCC plan are only as good as

the interagency partners contributions involved in the planning process. Repeat this process for the entirety of departments and agencies operating in a specific country, to include independent resourcing, and one can gain a glimpse at the potential challenges in obtaining unity of effort during the conduct of shaping operations.

In other words, policy at the level of the NSC, at least theoretically, is developed using a whole of government approach. The problems surface due to the lack of a “whole of government” entity between the NSC and individual country teams. As a result, there is no way for the NSC to “hand off” a policy decision to a regionally focused interagency body for execution. Instead, each agency with a stake or role in the policy gives guidance inside its own “stovepipe” and then that guidance is received for execution at the level of the country team (assuming the policy is meant to be executed in that country). It is analogous to a huge game of “telephone”, in which the original “message” from the NSC is often distorted or garbled by each agency before it hits a country team for execution.

Resultant In Country Challenges

As mentioned, the US Ambassador to any specific country is the President’s direct representative, serves as the chief executive officer, and is ultimately responsible for integrating the elements of national power in pursuit of national goals and objectives. Nevertheless, due to the process issues mentioned earlier, the parent- organizations of the elements of national power represented at the country team level are not necessarily aligned. Furthermore, each receives operational direction, funding, and authorities from their parent organizations, which may have distinct priorities and lines of effort. Varying operational and strategic end-states at times trends towards redundancy and at times competition.

For example, country team members engage and seek access and influence with a plethora of host nation actors and stakeholders (IGOs, NGOs, OGOs) in the conduct of shaping operations. Each of these country team members will have different tactical, operational and strategic goals. Given the policy dissonance described earlier, different organizations subsequently engage host nation personnel with slightly different agendas, which can detract from unity of effort. This is especially the case in countries where our departments or agencies do not specifically match those of the host nation. As a result, it is possible for multiple embassy officials to “engage” the same person/agency each with different end-states and vision of alignment with host nation actors.³⁴ This “gang tackle” diplomacy can confuse and send mixed messages to our potential partners.

This invariably affects unity of effort in shaping operations. For example, it is not uncommon to have US Law Enforcement entities engage host nation military forces to conduct law enforcement-like operations due to inept local host nation police forces. At the same time, the USAID and the DoS may be engaging/shaping the same organization to promote rule of law and organizational missions dissuading the military from such roles.³⁵ All are valid topics for diplomatic engagement; however, the multilateralist “shaping engagements” are at odds and potentially send mixed messages to the host nation entity we purpose to influence. According to the Project on National Security Reform, “This confusing and frustrating situation can undermine others’ willingness to collaborate with the United States.”³⁶

Without unified action, the agency that is best resourced ultimately gains the “access and influence” to shape the strategic environment they interpret as necessary,

which may not be aligned with the rest of the community. Given our required global defense posture, DoD is the best-resourced agency engaging stakeholders in the strategic environment, hence, the perceived militarization of US foreign policy over the past decade.³⁷ The lack of a regional level directive interagency mechanism to synchronize efforts allows this to happen.

Steps Towards Improvement

Over the past ten years, the greater academic and governmental community has expressed concern about imbalance of our shaping efforts abroad and the lack of interagency cooperation.³⁸ In response, executive and congressional leadership has sought ways to improve interagency coordination in our shaping efforts abroad. These include:

- Inclusion of State and USAID funding into the national security budget
- Revamped DoS and USAID Planning Mechanisms
- Increased Interagency Contact Points Beyond NSC and Country Team

This section will address the merits and shortcomings of each of these positive steps to improve whole of government efficiency in the conduct of shaping operations.

Inclusion of State and USAID Funding Into the National Security Budget

Secretary Clinton, with the support of the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, advocated and obtained congressional inclusion of diplomacy and development as part of the 2012 national security budget.³⁹ Acknowledging the need for whole of government participation in national security affairs is a positive step forward in improving our collective ability to project an appropriate amount of national power, and in the correct 3D ratio, in pursuit of the objectives listed in the national security strategy. As we have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is no pure military

solution just as there is no pure developmental or diplomatic solution. In today's era of persistent conflict, a symbiotic relationship among the elements of national power is more important than ever. Despite this recognition, inclusion of diplomacy and development in the national security budget does not guarantee adequate funding for diplomacy and developmental activities. In a 2011 speech, the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources expressed concern that Congress could "decide to shield defense spending and other categories by cutting everything else."⁴⁰

His concern is not unfounded. In response to the need for broader interagency authorities to respond to emergent challenges, Congress passed the Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF).⁴¹ Unlike previous authorizations, the GSCF is based upon interagency cost sharing in support of a wide variety of shaping objectives.⁴² For FY12, the GSCF authorized DoD and DoS to transfer up to \$350 million to the fund on an 80/20 cost share basis respectively. In its FY13 budget submission, DoS requested a \$25 million appropriation in support of this authorization. DoD, on the other hand, "did not request an appropriation or any new transfer authority."⁴³ This suggests hesitancy to collaborate/share funding during periods of fiscal austerity.

While in agreement with the premise of diplomacy, development and defense as co-equal tools in achieving U.S. foreign policy goals, budgetary machinations alone will not solve the operational integration required in Phase 0. In most, if not all, contingency operations, DoD will provide the preponderance of hard assets to respond even if it's in a supporting role. As such, it will not always be in DoD's interest to request and/or share funds that limit its ability to respond to contingencies. Shaping is broader than foreign assistance funding, training and equipping. If foreign assistance is indeed a component

of national security, it should be wielded as such to include a defined focus and desired operational and strategic effect coordinated with other elements of national power. Short of an authoritative mechanism at the regional and operational level to direct the correct mix of shaping tools - diplomacy, development and defense - there will be bureaucratic and institutional level hesitancy to consistently participate.

Revamped DoS and USAID Planning Mechanisms

A key component to asserting DoS and USAID lead in US engagement and shaping is the 2010 Quadrennial Defense and Diplomacy Review (QDDR).⁴⁴ Initiated by Secretary Clinton in 2009, the QDDR is modeled after DoD's Quadrennial Defense Review, the QDDR focuses on developing "civilian power" to "practice diplomacy, carry out developmental projects, and prevent and respond to crises."⁴⁵ The QDDR established priorities and vision for improving "civilian power" abroad and offered numerous recommendations to improve interagency coordination.

Similar to the DoD's QDR, the QDDR provides an institutional vision and a basis for budget justification, but does not provide any tangible mechanism beyond reinforcing ambassadorial leadership, to ensure interagency cooperation at the regional level.⁴⁶ Primarily focusing on the QDDRs exclusion of interagency lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, a scathing Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) report referred to the QDDR as "laundry lists of recommendations that are not prioritized, defined in enough detail to be credible or justified."⁴⁷

The QDDRs emphasis on elevating "civilian power alongside military power as equal pillars of US foreign policy"⁴⁸ lends some credibility to the CSIS report. While commendable in championing a US foreign policy balanced on the three pillars of diplomacy, development and defense, the semantics of "civilian power" and "military

power” suggests they are different. Regarding shaping operations, DoD, DoS and USAID all play a role in diplomacy, development and defense. At the country level, defense begins with diplomats developing a political climate to allow for defense cooperation. Military members also serve as diplomats representing US interests abroad. The US Chiefs of Mission/Ambassadors abroad do not represent “civilian power” or “military power,” they represent national power. The 3Ds are symbiotic, but if treated otherwise; the three pillars of foreign policy become the three “stovepipes” of foreign policy.

Despite the criticism, the QDDR has led to some new and innovative approaches to support US Chiefs of Missions abroad, which will improve efficiency in the conduct of Phase 0 operations. The most notable of these changes is an improved policy and strategy oriented planning process that the QDDR refers to as a “top down, bottom up” approach.⁴⁹ DoS utilizes the national security strategy to develop its overarching goals and vision in the QDDR and receives inputs from US Chiefs of Mission and functional bureaus to develop Joint Regional Strategies.⁵⁰ US Ambassadors subsequently develop three year “Integrated Country Strategies” that attempt to synchronize the entirety of the interagency planning effort at the individual country level.⁵¹ While commendable, this new planning process does not in itself eliminate the policy dissonance argued earlier as the primary authoritative contact points for planning occur only at the national security council and country team level.

Increased Interagency Contact Points and Collaboration

To reduce this dissonance and improve interagency regional strategic and operational planning synchronization and cooperation, DoS/USAID and DoD have increased the number of interagency contact points. In January 2012, DoD and DoS

signed a Memorandum of Understanding that doubles the number of personnel exchanged between departments.⁵² The departments will exchange roughly one hundred liaisons to facilitate and eventually institutionalize cooperation. Key among these exchanges is the “first ever Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff”⁵³ and a 2-star military officer who serves as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the DoS Political-Military Affairs Bureau.⁵⁴

At the operational level, DoS has increased its emphasis on the Political Advisor (POLAD) program. The POLAD program consists of senior DoS Foreign Service Officers assigned to all geographical and functional combatant commands in order to provide the necessary linkage between the military commands and the DoS.⁵⁵ For the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and the United States Africa Command the senior POLADs also hold the title of Civilian Deputy to the Commander. Most combatant commands have also developed staff sections dedicated to interagency coordination and outreach.

Indeed, the Combatant Commands have likewise incorporated interagency partners into their planning processes. A great example reflecting the trend among combatant commands to improve interagency collaboration is reflected in a July 2010 Government Accountability report on SOUTHCOM interagency collaboration efforts:

SOUTHCOM demonstrates a number of key practices that enhance and sustain collaboration with interagency and other stakeholders toward achieving security and stability in the region. These practices include: establishing mutually reinforcing strategies with partners, leveraging capabilities, and establishing means to operate across multiple agencies and organizations. For example, the command has defined and established a directorate to develop compatible policies and procedures that facilitate collaboration across agencies and organizations, and put in place mechanisms to share information with interagency and other stakeholders regularly and frequently.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, despite the great strides in interagency collaboration and unprecedented interagency presence at the combatant commands, the process basically remains ad hoc at the operational level as there is no authoritative mechanism to ensure unified action in the conduct of shaping activities.

This is the crux of the interagency collaboration challenge. Under ideal circumstances with sufficient time and resources, the interagency process and collaboration works fairly well. Nevertheless, despite improvements in the NSC, the policy distance from Washington to the field remains great, and interagency collaboration remains insufficient to allow for the effective engagement and shaping required in the National Security Strategy.

Recommendations

If we collectively seek to efficiently project national power abroad to shape a global environment based upon the goals stated in the National Security Strategy, we collectively need to consider ways to decrease policy dissonance and strengthen not only unity of effort, but also unity of command at the regional and country team level. The most effective way to ensure interagency collaboration would be to create an authoritative interagency mechanism at the regional level with cross cutting authorities. If such change seems too challenging at this point, than at a minimum, greater “whole of government” interagency participation should occur in the development of the US Chief of Mission’s Integrated Country Strategy. If this measure also proves ineffective, than Congress should reconsider the development of an interagency Goldwater-Nichols to maximize government efficiency in the projection of national power.

Modify Unified Command Plan

As argued in this paper, most of the interagency friction is the result of a gap created by lack of interagency authoritative capacity or integration below the national level. In *The Death of the Combatant Command? Toward a Joint Interagency Approach*,⁵⁷ authors Buchanan, Davis and Wright propose filling the gap with a standing civilian led interagency organization that would replace the current unified command plan. Drawing on U.S. interagency experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, the authors posit one element of national power should not be responsible for integrating the others. Also pointing to the lack of a directive authority at the regional level, the authors advocate for a cross cutting civilian organization capable of ensuring unity of effort.⁵⁸

This recommendation has merit. The preponderance of our national power projection each day is conducted during Phase 0 shaping and engagement operations, which we use in our attempt to influence and lead an “international system that can meet the challenges our times.”⁵⁹ When a contingency occurs, the designated lead agency is then expected to leverage appropriate interagency and international partners for support in its attempt to coordinate and maintain unity of effort. The challenges inherent to this expectation are the same as those explained in *The Death of the Combatant Command? Toward a Joint Interagency Approach*.⁶⁰ The goal of Phase 0 operations is to shape and engage a country/region in pursuit of stated national security goals. Phase 0 is a whole of government endeavor. When a contingency occurs, it is still a whole of government endeavor. There are no military pure solutions. As such, we should consider ways to maintain or strengthen unity of command in lieu of just unity of effort. An empowered civilian led interagency construct at the operational/geographical command level would improve efficiency of our shaping efforts abroad.

In *Beyond Goldwaters-Nichols II* (BG-N II), the authors highlight unity of effort in interagency operations a necessity, but fall short of advocating a revamp of the Unified Command Plan.⁶¹ BG-N II attributes this to the fact that our political system, short of the President's "temporary emergency power," does not provide an inclusive national security command and control system giving the President command authority over the non-DoD national security agencies.⁶² BG-N II does not advocate a new Goldwater-Nichols for the interagency, and proffers increased efforts at coordination and professional development to achieve unity of effort in lieu of a legislated interagency unity of command.⁶³

Nevertheless, a regionally oriented unified interagency command structure would facilitate more efficient Phase 0 operations and allow for a more fluid transition in response to any unforeseen contingency. The administration/construct of such an organization is beyond the scope of this paper; however, one could look at the evolution of US Southern Command and US Africa Command to see how it may look. Both commands have sought to establish an interagency and partner oriented organization versus a warfighting command. As a test case, DOD's 2008 Guidance for the Employment of Force required SOUTHCOM and AFRICOM to seek broader interagency involvement in developing its theater security cooperation plan.⁶⁴

SOUTHCOM subsequently involved numerous interagency partners in the construct of its Phase 0 TSCP plans. Such coordination allowed SOUTHCOM to "to identify resources to leverage by identifying which partners were best positioned to have the greatest effect on a specific objective and by identifying specific programs, activities, and operations that other interagency partners engage in that include similar

objectives.”⁶⁵ As a result of this effort, SOUTHCOM’s 2009 Theater Campaign Plan included thirty theater objectives, of which interagency partners led twenty-two.⁶⁶ The author is unaware of other departments or agencies conducting such interagency collaboration in the development of Phase 0 plans.

Such efforts at improving Phase 0 regional theater engagement should not be limited to the combatant commands. In theory, to fulfill national security objectives all agencies should look at ways to support as well as be supported. Instead of a military commander with a strong interagency coordination cell, we should consider an NSC-lite construct served by a primary staff representing the DIME-FIL. This senior staff would not relinquish its respective agency authorities and have directive authority back to their parent organizations similar to the combatant commander through the Secretary of Defense. Even if the designated commander/director did not have formal lines of authority to the DIME-FIL staff, the senior nature of the staff members and connectivity to the National Security Staff and department heads would allow for increased collaboration in Phase 0 and throughout contingencies. This NSC-like interagency staff would serve as an important strategic and operational linkage from the NSC to the country teams and interagency task forces in the field. Increased interagency unity of command at this level could provide the authoritative mechanism that would minimize policy dissonance and reduce interagency friction. Operational, budgetary, and informational collaboration would increase and stovepipes would be minimized.

Such an organizational construct would undoubtedly raise questions of authority and pose a challenge to institutional bureaucratic interests, but would force a dialogue on roles and responsibilities. Take the drive for regional public-private partnerships as

an example. Should DoD be the lead in developing such relationships? Or, is this the purview of USAID or DoS? Or, does each agency have the claim to such relationships? Should such a relationship occur at the country team level, or on a regional basis? Without interagency awareness and dialogue on the topic, our collective efforts are potentially disarticulated, redundant and confusing to those with we wish to partner.

An example of how such a construct can work is seen in Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S), which is a functional task force established to counter illicit trafficking and counter-terrorism primarily in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility.⁶⁷ This task force is a joint, interagency, multinational organization established through memorandums of understanding where participating organizations see the benefit of collaboration. Close proximity of JIATF-S partners allows for required personal relationships and the cross cutting authorities to match the right mix agencies capabilities to respond to a wide variety of narcotics trafficking related events.⁶⁸ A unified interagency command structure with similar cross cutting authorities could occur initially without significant legislative changes. Leadership of such a creation could be either a senior DoS representative as the lead agency for foreign policy, or an appointed NSC representative relocated from the National Security Staff to the regional focused command.

Revamped Whole of Government Approach to Planning at the Embassy

Another way to reduce policy dissonance and improve efficiency in Phase 0 operations is to strengthen the planning process at the US Missions abroad. DoS transition to a three year “Integrated Country Strategy (ICS)” for US Embassy Missions is a nascent initiative, but a marked improvement from previous planning. As

mentioned, the ICS is referred to as the Ambassador's plan. As the President's designated representative, the Ambassador is the senior interagency official in country.

Although the DoS normally leads the staffing process to develop the ICS, measures should be taken to "ensure" the ICS is a collaborative interagency product. Unfortunately, interagency planning at the Embassy is susceptible to the same "tyranny of the inbox" that affects the NSC strategic planning. Country Teams are not equipped with robust staffs, nor have the training to develop interagency plans. As a result, the potential exists for minimal representation during what should otherwise be a whole of government-developed strategy at the country team level. The DoS has developed an ICS support staff; however, all agencies with a vested interest in shaping should provide additional support to assist in country level strategy development.

Time for a new "Goldwater-Nichols" Act?

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 came to fruition after the inability of DoD's military services to collaborate effectively in the conduct of joint operations. In the twenty-five years since Goldwaters-Nichols, the US DoD has excelled as the world's preeminent joint force. DoD plans, shapes, engages, fights, and recovers as a joint force. Goldwater-Nichols was key to integrating the disparate service functions.

Given the current global strategic environment we must plan and execute as a unified force, which includes all the elements of national power. As argued in this paper, the current interagency projection of national power remains deficient. As argued by CSIS in 2005:

Interagency operations are no longer rare. Yet crises are still managed largely on a case by case basis, with interagency coordination mechanisms reinvented each time. While such ad hoc processes are agile, they are neither coherent nor durable. Since there is no reason to believe that today's crisis will be the last, it makes sense to plan for the

next one. So increasing the effectiveness of national security efforts begins by institutionalizing strategic planning for national security.⁶⁹

Almost ten years later, our whole of government Phase 0 planning and implementation remains deficient. Clearly, key executive and congressional leaders have taken important steps to improve our collective ability to engage and shape the global environment desired in the National Security Strategy. We are making progress; however, the global strategic environment will only increase in complexity. If unity of action cannot be achieved through the current system of Presidential Directives, MOUs, and ad hoc planning efforts, then Congress should consider legislation that does.⁷⁰

Cooperation among the interagency is better than it has ever been. Our senior leaders recognize the need to continue to improve this cooperation if we are to collectively shape a global strategic environment that can answer the challenges of the VUCA world. The world is indeed changing fast. Our future national security necessitates we keep pace.

Endnotes

¹ Barrack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010)., Cover letter.

² Ibid., 2.

³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Hilary Clinton, *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, December 2010), ii.

⁵ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), V-6.

⁶ Ibid., I-4.

⁷ Hillary Clinton, "Opening Remarks on the President's FY 2009 War Supplemental Request," Washington DC, 30 April 2009.
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2009a/04/122463.htm> (accessed January 5, 2013). This is

the earliest reference found by the author of the terminology of defense, diplomacy and development as the pillars of US foreign policy.

⁸ Robert E. Hunter (principal author), Edward Gnehm, and George Joulwan, *Integrating Instruments of National Power: Lessons Learned and Best Practices* (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2008), vii.

⁹ Nina M. Serafino, Catherine Dale and Pat Towell, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad: Key Proposals and Issues for Congress* (Washington DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, February 9, 2012), 1-2.
<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/183725.pdf> (accessed 30 November 2012).

¹⁰ US Missions abroad refers to US Embassies.

¹¹ Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986

¹² Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 2.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Commander, U.S. Joint Forces Command, Joint Futures Group (J59), *The Joint Operating Environment (JOE)* (Suffolk, VA: U.S. Joint Forces Command, February 18, 2010), 4-7. http://www.jfcom.mil/newslink/storyarchive/2010/JOE_2010_o.pdf (accessed September 10, 2012)

¹⁵ National power consists of all the tools available to influence the decisions of other actors. It is not limited to hard power (coercion and payment) but also includes soft power (persuasion or attraction). See Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and David A. Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation* (Boston: Pearson Education Inc., 2011). 328-330.

¹⁶ National power is often described by the acronym DIME-FIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, Law Enforcement)

¹⁷ Project on National Security Reform, *Turning Ideas Into Action* (Arlington, VA: Project on National Security Reform, 2009), 14.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. 14-15.

²⁰ Many Joint Staff officers, and subject matter experts, can attest to “teeing up” a senior leader for an NSC meeting even if the preparation includes a “walk and talk” brief and “5x8 card” with appropriate talking points while en route to the meeting.

²¹ Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley, “Strategic Planning for National Security: A New Project Solarium,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* 40 (2d Quarter 2006): 81.

²² Ibid. 80-86.

²³ Barrack Obama, *Presidential Policy Directive -1 – Organization of the National Security Council System* (Washington, DC, 13 February 2009). 1.

²⁴ Also according PPD-1, the NSC Principals Committee (NSC/PC) remains the senior interagency forum for policy development, and the NSC Deputies Committee (NSC/DC) is responsible for policy implementation.

²⁵ Project on National Security Reform, *Turning Ideas Into Action* (Arlington, VA: Project on National Security Reform, 2009) 15.

²⁶ The country team consists of representatives from all U.S. agencies present in country. Some embassies have up to forty different departments and agencies represented on the country team.

²⁷ Serafino, Dale and Towell, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad: Key Proposals and Issues for Congress*, 39-40. The current system allows for wide disparity in levels of effectiveness because it is not sufficiently resourced or institutionalized at the country team level. If a competent ambassador (or deputy chief of mission) makes it a priority, it is done well. If not, coordination suffers.

²⁸ NSPD-44 reinforces DoS primacy over all departments and agencies for coordinating and carrying out all laws and policies related to foreign policy, but falls short of providing legal authority over other agencies in this endeavor. NSPD-44 only applies to regions in conflict or instability. (See George Bush, *National Security Presidential Directive-44 (NSPD-44) - Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization* (Washington D.C.: The White House, December 7, 2005), <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-44.html> (accessed 9 January 2013).

²⁹ Jeffrey Buchanan, Maxie Davis, and Lee Wright, "Death of the Combatant Command? Toward a Joint Interagency Approach," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 52 (1st Quarter 2009): 92-97.

³⁰ Serafino, Dale and Towell, *Building Civilian Interagency Capacity for Missions Abroad: Key Proposals and Issues for Congress*, 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

³² U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), II-2-II-5.

³³ DoD guidance states, "To the extent feasible, joint planning *should* include key participants from the outset." U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Interorganizational Coordination During Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-08 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 24, 2011), xii.

³⁴ Another example of divergent interests/shaping efforts is seen in counter-terrorism capacity building in the Horn of Africa. The Task Force on Non-Traditional Security Assistance identified "a lack of coherent strategic vision and authoritative planning on CT matters across DOD, State and other relevant U.S. government departments." Further, "there is no common structure to guide the identification of critical CT capabilities, rationalize resources across

agency boundaries, and integrate activities in target countries.” (Stewart Patrick, *Integrating 21st Century Development and Security Assistance: Final Report of the Task Force on Non-Traditional Security Assistance* (Washington DC: The CSIS Press, December 2007), 9, <http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/080118-andrews-integrating21stcentury.pdf> (accessed 9 December 2012)).

³⁵ Based on personal experience.

³⁶ Project on National Security Reform, *Turning Ideas Into Action* (Arlington, VA: Project on National Security Reform, 2009), 15.

³⁷ Patrick, *Integrating 21st Century Development and Security Assistance: Final Report of the Task Force on Non-Traditional Security Assistance*, ix.

³⁸ Multiple reports highlight this imbalance. For a recent academic report on the topic see Gordon Adams and Rebecca Williams, *A New Way Forward: Rebalancing Security Assistance Programs and Authorities* (Washington DC: The Stimson Center, March 2011), (page), http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/A_New_Way_Forward_20110420_1.pdf (accessed 7 December 2012), 7-8.

³⁹ Thomas Nides, “A Unified Security Budget for the United States,” Remarks at the Center for American Progress, Washington DC, 31 August 2011. <http://www.state.gov/s/dmr/remarks/2011/171327.htm> (accessed January 10, 2012).

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ A four-year pilot program by the FY2012 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 1112-81), Section 1207.

⁴² Unlike previous NDAA authorizations, such as 1206 Counter Terrorism Train and Equip, the GSCF allows DoD and DoS to collaborate on traditionally none military areas such as justice sector reform, rule of law, and stabilization programs.

⁴³ Nina M. Serafino, *Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF): Summary and Issue Overview* (Washington DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, August 1, 2012), 1-6, <http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/row/R42641.pdf> (accessed 8 December 2012).

⁴⁴ Clinton, *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Intro Letter.

⁴⁶ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR): Concepts Are Not Enough* (Washington DC: The CSIS Press, December 21, 2010), 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁸ Clinton, *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review*, ii.

⁴⁹ Department of State, US Agency for International Development, Department of Defense, *3D Planning Guidance – Pre Decisional Working Draft*. (Washington, DC), 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁵¹ Ibid., 16.

⁵² Andrew Shapiro, "A New Era in State-Defense Cooperation," Remarks at the Center for International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC, 8 August 2012.
<http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rm/196200.htm> (accessed October 7, 2012).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Southern Command Demonstrates Interagency Collaboration, but Its Haiti Disaster Response Revealed Challenges Conducting a Large Military Operation: Report to Congressional Committees* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, July 2010), 2.

⁵⁷ Buchanan, Davis, and Wright, "Death of the Combatant Command? Toward a Joint Interagency Approach," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 92-97.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Obama, *National Security Strategy*., Cover letter.

⁶⁰ Buchanan, Davis, and Wright, "Death of the Combatant Command? Toward a Joint Interagency Approach," *Joint Force Quarterly*, 92-97.

⁶¹ Clark A. Murdock and Michèle A. Flournoy (lead investigators), *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), July 2005), http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/bgn_ph2_report.pdf (accessed 10 Jan 2013), 17.

⁶² "While Title 10 of the U.S. Code⁷ gives the Secretary of Defense "authority, direction and control" over the Department subject to the direction of the President, Congress has not given the President the same authority over the USG agencies, except when he invokes his temporary emergency powers. There is no "national security command and control" system giving the President command authority over the national security agencies similar to that given to the Secretary over the Military Services." Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *U.S. Southern Command Demonstrates Interagency Collaboration, but Its Haiti Disaster Response Revealed Challenges Conducting a Large Military Operation: Report to Congressional Committees*, 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Murdock and Flournoy, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era Phase 2 Report*, 6.

⁷⁰ The advantages of Congressional action are that it is permanent, institutionalized and can't be "undone" by a future administration. The disadvantages are that it does not take into account the organizational cultures and preferences of the agencies involved. So any legislation will be somewhat directive and "ham-handed", entailing a relatively long and painful adjustment period as executive branch agencies adjust to comply with the new law. In other words, things might get worse before they get better.

