

CRS Report for Congress

National Security Strategy: Legislative Mandates, Execution to Date, and Considerations for Congress

Updated July 28, 2008

Catherine Dale
Specialist in International Security
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division



Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

National Security Strategy: Legislative Mandates, Execution to Date, and Considerations for Congress

Summary

There is a growing, still highly inchoate, debate among practitioners and scholars, including participants from across the political spectrum, concerning the need to reform the U.S. government's national security system. Reform proponents argue that much of the current architecture was designed to meet the global security challenges of the post-World War II context, and may not be appropriate for addressing 21st-century challenges. That architecture includes the organizations, structures, and processes that govern decision-making, budgeting, planning and execution, and congressional oversight of national security activities. Strategic guidance documents, including formal strategies and other forms of guidance, are a key element of that system. The current debates are timely because a new administration may begin issuing strategic documents early in its tenure in office.

National security strategy can theoretically serve several distinct purposes:

- By offering prioritized objectives and indicating which elements of national power (“ways and means”) are to be used to meet them, it can provide guidance to departments and agencies to use in their internal processes for budgeting, planning and executing, and organizing, training, and equipping personnel.
- By clearly linking goals and the approaches designed to meet them, national security strategy can provide the executive branch a key tool for justifying requested resources to Congress.
- By laying out a detailed strategic vision, it can help inform public audiences both at home and abroad about U.S. government intent.

Some critics charge that executive branch processes for developing strategy are flawed because, for example, they fail to establish priorities, consider fiscal constraints, or assign responsibilities to specific agencies. Some note that the issuance of strategic guidance does not always fully comply with legislative mandates, while others note that the mandates themselves could be improved — for example, by better synchronizing requirements for related documents.

Congress can continue to shape the role that strategy documents play in the national security system through legislative requirements regarding the types of strategic documents required, their primary and contributing authors, their contents, their relationships with other strategic documents, their deadlines for delivery, and their form of delivery (classified or unclassified).

This report reviews current legislative mandates for security strategic documents, assesses the recent history of execution, describes strategic documents in related fields for comparison, presents considerations that may be useful in assessing current requirements and execution, and notes several current proposals for changes to legislative requirements. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Contents

Introduction	1
Key National Security Strategic Documents: Mandates and Execution	3
National Security Strategy	3
National Defense Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review	5
National Military Strategy	8
Other Strategic Guidance: Mandates and Execution	11
Homeland Security	12
Intelligence	14
Strategic Guidance: Considerations for Congress	16
Frequency	16
Synchronization of Timelines	17
Clear Relationships Among Strategic Documents	18
Prioritization	18
Roles and Responsibilities	18
Fiscal Constraints	19
Competition of Ideas	19
Intended Audience	20
Timeframe	21
Strategic Guidance: Recent Proposals	21
Quadrennial National Security Review	22
National Security Planning Guidance	23
Staffing Strategic Guidance Activities	23

National Security Strategy: Legislative Mandates, Execution to Date, and Considerations for Congress

Introduction

There is a growing, still highly inchoate debate among practitioners and scholars, including participants from across the political spectrum, concerning the need to reform the U.S. government's national security system.¹ Reform proponents argue that much of the current architecture was designed to meet the global security challenges of the post-World War II context, and may not be appropriate for addressing 21st-century challenges.² That architecture includes the organizations, structures, and processes that govern decision making, budgeting, planning and execution, and congressional oversight of national security activities.³ National security strategic guidance documents, including formal strategies and other forms of guidance, are a key element of that system.

In general, a strategy articulates prioritized “ends” and then links “means” (resources) and “ways” (approaches) in a plan of action to achieve those ends in a given context.⁴ A strategy may be narrowly targeted, designed to achieve one specific goal, such as a strategy for a marketing campaign for a single new product, or it may address a broad field including multiple, prioritized objectives and initiatives, such as a company's overall strategy to succeed in the marketplace.⁵ At

¹ For an overview of the current national security reform debates, see CRS Report RL34455, *Organizing the U.S. Government for National Security: Overview of the Interagency Reform Debates*, by Catherine Dale, Nina Serafino, and Pat Towell.

² The cornerstone of the current system is still the National Security Act of 1947 and its subsequent amendments. That legislation laid the foundations of a new national security regime, including the creation of the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Defense, a separate Department of the Air Force, and a permanent Joint Chiefs of Staff. See National Security Act of 1947, P.L. 80-235.

³ There is no single, shared understanding of the concept of “national security” — some observers include homeland security, while others focus exclusively on challenges abroad. Some observers include economic, energy, and/or environmental security, while others prefer a narrower definition.

⁴ For an overview of the elements of strategy, see John M. Collins, *Military Strategy: Principles, Practices, and Historical Perspectives*, Potomac Books, Inc: Dulles, VA, 2001.

⁵ The October 2007 *National Strategy for Homeland Security* defines “strategy” only in the more limited sense, focused on a single goal, as “an integrated approach to achieve a policy that takes into account underlying assumptions, context, tradeoffs, and necessary resources.”

(continued...)

its best, strategy is iterative — that is, there are feedback loops in place to help update the strategy based on the changing outside environment and on lessons learned as the strategy is implemented.

National security strategy for the U.S. government can theoretically serve several distinct purposes:

- By offering prioritized objectives and indicating which elements of national power (“ways and means”) are to be used to meet them, it can provide guidance to departments and agencies to use in their internal processes for budgeting, planning and executing, and organizing, training, and equipping personnel.
- By clearly linking goals and the approaches designed to meet them, national security strategy can provide the executive branch a key tool for justifying requested resources to Congress.
- By laying out a detailed strategic vision, it can help inform public audiences both at home and abroad about U.S. government intent.

Some critics charge that executive branch processes for developing strategy are flawed because, for example, they fail to establish priorities, consider fiscal constraints, or assign responsibilities to specific agencies. Some note that the issuance of strategic guidance does not always fully comply with legislative mandates, while others note that the mandates themselves could be improved — for example, by better synchronizing requirements for related documents.

Congress can continue to shape the role that strategy documents play in the national security system through legislative requirements regarding the types of strategic documents required, their primary and contributing authors, their contents, their relationships with other strategic documents, their deadlines for delivery, and their form of delivery (classified or unclassified). The current debates include several proposals for changes to existing legislative requirements for strategy documents. These debates are timely because a new administration is likely to begin issuing strategic documents early in its tenure in office.

This report reviews the current legislative mandates for key security strategic documents, assesses the recent history of execution, describes strategic documents in related fields for comparison, presents a series of considerations that may be useful in assessing current requirements and execution, and notes several major proposals for change.

⁵ (...continued)

See Homeland Security Council, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, October 2007, chart on page 44. Strategy-making is more challenging when it must balance and prioritize multiple goals.

Key National Security Strategic Documents: Mandates and Execution

From the traditional defense perspective, the core national security strategic documents today are the national security strategy, the national defense strategy together with the Quadrennial Defense Review report, and the national military strategy. The military strategy written by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff describes how the military will operationalize the defense strategy written by the Secretary of Defense, which in turn covers those aspects of the security strategy for which the Department of Defense is responsible. All of the strategies are mandated by law, and their contents are prescribed in some detail. To date, execution has not always precisely matched the letter of the law. This section describes their respective mandates and recent implementation.

National Security Strategy

National security strategies are issued by the President and pertain to the U.S. government as a whole. The current mandate for the President to deliver to Congress a comprehensive, annual “national security strategy report” derives from the *National Security Act of 1947*, as amended by the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*.⁶

The legislation requires that a strategy report be submitted to Congress annually, on the date the President submits the budget for the following fiscal year. In addition to the regular report for that year, a newly elected President is required to submit a strategy report not less than 150 days after taking office. Each report is to be submitted in both classified and unclassified format.

According to the legislation, each report must address five points:

- “The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.
- “The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States.
- “The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national power of the

⁶ National Security Act of 1947, P.L. 80-235, §108, and Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, P.L. 99-433, §603. Before that legislation, there was no such comprehensive legislative mandate, although a variety of national strategies were developed over time. One of the most notable was NSC-68, “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” a (now-declassified) top secret document produced by President Truman’s National Security Council on April 14, 1950. NSC-68 described in detail the (Cold War) strategic context, noted the intentions and capabilities of both the United States and the Soviet Union, and presented possible courses of action together with assessments.

United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph.

- “The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.
- “Such other information as may be necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States.”⁷

In practice, since the *Goldwater-Nichols Act*, administrations have submitted national security strategies fairly regularly although not always precisely on schedule. The Reagan Administration submitted two (1987, 1988); the first Bush Administration submitted three (1990, 1991, and 1993); and the Clinton Administration submitted seven (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000).

The current Bush Administration has twice submitted a document entitled *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, in September 2002 and March 2006. The 2002 *Strategy* described the global strategic context, named broad goals (“political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity”), and described eight broad areas of effort designed to meet those goals. For each area, the *Strategy* listed subset initiatives but did not describe how they are to be achieved and did not assign responsibility for achieving them to specific agencies. Neither the eight major areas, nor the subsets within any area, were prioritized.⁸

The 2006 *Strategy* maintained the same basic format, though it added an additional area of effort (“challenges and opportunities of globalization”) for a total of nine, and it included, in each area, a discussion of “successes” since 2002.⁹

By law, the next national security strategy is due from the current Administration in early 2009, to be followed, 150 days after the Inauguration, by a new national security strategy from the newly elected Administration.

⁷ National Security Act of 1947, P.L. 80-235, §108, and Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, P.L. 99-433, §603.

⁸ To illustrate the *Strategy's* broad level of discourse, one area of effort, “work with others to defuse regional conflicts,” included as a subset the statement, “Coordination with European allies and international institutions is essential for constructive conflict mediation and successful peace operations.” The document did not note which U.S. government agencies should lead or participate in the coordination; on what matters they ought to coordinate; or how important coordination with partners is, compared with unilateral initiatives to “defuse regional conflicts.” See President George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, September 2002.

⁹ President George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 2006.

National Defense Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review

National defense strategies and reports of the quadrennial defense review process are Department of Defense (DOD) documents, intended to elaborate on DOD's support to the broader national security strategy.

Existing legislation requires the Secretary of Defense to conduct a quadrennial defense review (QDR) and to submit a report on the QDR to Congress every four years.¹⁰ The original QDR requirement, for a one-time review, was introduced by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY1997.¹¹ The permanent requirement to conduct a QDR was introduced by the NDAA for FY2000, which amended Title 10 of U.S. Code to that effect.¹² The requirement for a national defense strategy is derived from this legislation, which mandates that the QDR include “a comprehensive discussion of the national defense strategy of the United States.”

The QDR is to be conducted during the first year of every Administration (“during a year following a year evenly divisible by four”). The QDR report is to be submitted to Congress the following year, not later than the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year. The Secretary of Defense is to conduct the review “in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,” and the review is to look out 20 years into the future. The legislation does not specify the classification level for the report.

The QDR report is intended to be “nested” in — a subordinate part of — the broader national strategic framework. As the legislation states, it will “delineate a national defense strategy consistent with the most recent national security strategy.”¹³

Legislation describes in detail 15 items that the QDR report to Congress must contain, including overall national defense strategy, national interests, threats, assumptions, and requirements:

- “The results of the review, including a comprehensive discussion of the national defense strategy of the United States and the force structure best suited to implement that strategy at a low-to-moderate level of risk.

¹⁰ The QDR itself is a review process, while the QDR report is a written product produced by that process.

¹¹ NDAA for FY1997, September 23, 1996, P.L. 104-201, §923. The requirement was based on the recommendations of the 1995 Commission on Roles and Missions, which was constituted pursuant to the NDAA for FY1994, November 30, 1993, P.L. 103-160.

¹² Title 10, U.S. Code, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 2, §118. The NDAA for FY 2000, October 5, 1999, P.L. 106-65, Division A, Title IX, §901, amended Title 10 to include §118. Subsequent legislation amended parts of the mandate, see NDAA for FY2002, December 28, 2001, P.L. 107-107, §921; and Bob Stump NDAA for FY2003, December 2, 2002, P.L. 107-314, §922 and 923.

¹³ Title 10, U.S. Code, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 2, §118 (b) (1).

- “The assumed or defined national security interests of the United States that inform the national defense strategy defined in the review.
- “The threats to the assumed or defined national security interests of the United States that were examined for the purposes of the review and the scenarios developed in the examination of those threats.
- “The assumptions used in the review, including assumptions relating to (A) the status of readiness of United States forces; (B) the cooperation of allies, mission-sharing and additional benefits to and burdens on United States forces resulting from coalition operations; (C) warning times; (D) levels of engagement in operations other than war and smaller-scale contingencies and withdrawal from such operations and contingencies; and (E) the intensity, duration, and military and political end-states of conflicts and smaller-scale contingencies.
- “The effect on the force structure and on readiness for high-intensity combat of preparations for and participation in operations other than war and smaller-scale contingencies.
- “The manpower and sustainment policies required under the national defense strategy to support engagement in conflicts lasting longer than 120 days.
- “The anticipated roles and missions of the reserve components in the national defense strategy and the strength, capabilities, and equipment necessary to assure that the reserve components can capably discharge those roles and missions.
- “The appropriate ratio of combat forces to support forces (commonly referred to as the tooth-to-tail ratio) under the national defense strategy, including, in particular, the appropriate number and size of headquarters units and Defense Agencies for that purpose.
- “The strategic and tactical air-lift, sea-lift, and ground transportation capabilities required to support the national defense strategy.
- “The forward presence, pre-positioning, and other anticipatory deployments necessary under the national defense strategy for conflict deterrence and adequate military response to anticipated conflicts.
- “The extent to which resources must be shifted among two or more theaters under the national defense strategy in the event of conflict in such theaters.
- “The advisability of revisions to the Unified Command Plan as a result of the national defense strategy.

- “The effect on force structure of the use by the armed forces of technologies anticipated to be available for the ensuing 20 years.
- “The national defense mission of the Coast Guard.
- “Any other matter the Secretary considers appropriate.”¹⁴

To date, three QDRs have been conducted — in 1997 on the basis of the one-time legislative requirement (see above), and in 2001 and 2006 on the basis of the permanent mandate.¹⁵ All three QDR reports were submitted to Congress on time.¹⁶

The first two QDR reports included a defense strategy, as mandated by legislation. Section III of the 1997 *QDR Report* was entitled “Defense Strategy,” and it began with a summary of national security strategy, including national interests. That summary was based on the (recent) February 1996 White House document *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement*.

Section II of the 2001 *QDR Report* was entitled “Defense Strategy.” At the time the review was conducted and the *Report* written, the most recent national security strategy dated from December 2000 — *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, written by the Clinton Administration. The 2001 *QDR Report* described broad national objectives — “peace, freedom and prosperity” — but did not refer specifically to national strategy.¹⁷

In a departure from past practice, DOD issued the March 2005 *National Defense Strategy (NDS)* separately from and prior to its partner *QDR Report*, which was issued in February 2006. The *NDS* repeatedly cited the most recent national security strategy at the time, from September 2002. The 2005 *NDS* was notable for introducing a new, quadripartite categorization of global security challenges: “traditional,” “irregular,” “catastrophic,” or “disruptive.”

¹⁴ Title 10, U.S. Code, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 2, §118 (d).

¹⁵ Substantively, the requirements for the 1997 QDR were quite similar to the current requirements, including 13 of the 15 current items; the items not included were U.S. national security interests, and the defense mission of the U.S. Coast Guard. A key precursor to the QDRs was the DOD “Bottom-Up Review,” launched in early 1993 by newly confirmed Secretary of Defense Les Aspin and directed by Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Frank Wisner. See Les Aspin, *Report on the Bottom-Up Review*, Washington, D.C., October 1993.

¹⁶ The 1997 QDR report, of May 1997, was submitted on time; the FY1997 NDAA required the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress the QDR report by May 15, 1997; see §923(d). The 2001 QDR report was submitted early. The 2006 QDR report was submitted on time, at the time of the February 2006 budget submission.

¹⁷ The defense strategy discussion in the 2001 *QDR Report* introduced the quadripartite “assure, dissuade, deter, defeat” description of defense policy goals. These refer to “assuring allies and friends; dissuading future military competition; deterring threats and coercion against U.S. interests; and if deterrence fails, decisively defeating any adversary.”

The 2006 *QDR Report* emphasized its direct link with the 2005 *NDS*. It stated, “The foundation of this QDR is the *National Defense Strategy*, published in March 2005,”¹⁸ and it echoed the four global security challenges introduced by the *NDS*.

The 2006 *Report* also established four “focus areas”: “defeating terrorist networks,” “defending the homeland in depth,” “shaping the choices of countries at strategic crossroads,” and “preventing hostile states and non-state actors from acquiring or using WMD.” These four areas were not assigned relative priority, but they were labeled “priority” areas in comparison with other possible issues. The Report described each area and the capabilities it required; provided a “refined” version of the force planning construct (the guidance used for sizing and shaping the force); discussed 10 portfolios of capabilities, including implied tasks; and addressed three sets of institutional and organizational concerns — the defense enterprise, DOD personnel, and coordination with other agencies and with international partners.

The law requires that the next QDR be conducted in 2009, and that a QDR report be submitted to the Congress by early February 2010. Following the “separate document” model established by the most recent *QDR Report* and *NDS*, in July 2008, DOD finalized a separate 2008 *National Defense Strategy* and provided it to some audiences in limited distribution, pending a public release. The 2008 *NDS* reportedly calls for enhancing investment to meet “irregular” challenges — terminology borrowed from the 2005 *NDS* — while assuming some risk in conventional arenas. The new *NDS* also reportedly adopts an expansive definition of potential security challenges to include space and cyber threats, natural disasters, pandemic diseases, and competition for resources.¹⁹

National Military Strategy

The current mandate for a national military strategy is provided by Title 10, U.S. Code, as amended by the NDAA for FY2004.²⁰ This legislation permanently mandates a biennial review of national military strategy, by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in coordination with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and unified commanders. A written report based on that review is to be submitted to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives by February 15 of even-numbered years. The report is required to be consistent with national security strategy and the most recent QDR. The legislation does not specify classification level.

Legislation prescribes specific contents for the national military strategy report, including the strategy itself, the strategic environment, threats, military objectives, means for meeting those objectives, and required resources:

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 2006.

¹⁹ Jason Sherman, “New Strategy Calls for Increasing Investment in Irregular Capabilities,” *Inside Defense*, July 28, 2008, and discussions with DOD officials, 2008.

²⁰ Title 10, U.S. Code, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 5, §153, as amended by the NDAA for FY2004, November 24, 2003, P.L. 108-136, §903.

- “Delineation of a national military strategy.
- “A description of the strategic environment and the opportunities and challenges that affect United States national interests and United States national security.
- “A description of the regional threats to United States national interests and United States national security.
- “A description of the international threats posed by terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and asymmetric challenges to United States national security.
- “Identification of United States national military objectives and the relationship of those objectives to the strategic environment, regional, and international threats.
- “Identification of the strategy, underlying concepts, and component elements that contribute to the achievement of United States national military objectives.
- “Assessment of the capabilities and adequacy of United States forces (including both active and reserve components) to successfully execute the national military strategy.
- “Assessment of the capabilities, adequacy, and interoperability of regional allies of the United States and or other friendly nations to support United States forces in combat operations and other operations for extended periods of time.”²¹

The first report issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the basis of this legislation was the 2004 *National Military Strategy of the United States of America: A Strategy for Today, a Vision for Tomorrow*. The document stated its purpose and its relationships to other strategic guidance: “The *National Military Strategy (NMS)* supports the aims of the *National Security Strategy (NSS)* and implements the *National Defense Strategy (NDS)*. It described the Armed Forces’ plan to achieve military objectives in the near term and provides the vision for ensuring they remain decisive in the future.”²²

Although the 2004 *NMS* was issued prior to the March 2005 *NDS*, the *NMS* was clearly informed by early *NDS* work, because the *NMS* cites key concepts from the

²¹ Title 10, U.S. Code, §153 (d) (2).

²² Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, “A Strategy for Today, a Vision for Tomorrow,” 2004, p. 1.

2005 *National Defense Strategy*, including the four strategic challenges — traditional, irregular, catastrophic, disruptive.²³

Subsequent national military strategy reports were due to the Armed Services Committees in February 2006 and February 2008.

The absence, until as late as 2003, of a codified permanent national military strategy requirement, may seem surprising, but the general need for military strategy was recognized in both law and practice much earlier.²⁴ Prior to the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act, Title 10 U.S. Code described the duties of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as including “prepar[ing] strategic plans and provid[ing] the strategic direction of the armed forces.”²⁵ The Goldwater-Nichols Act amended Title 10 to include a new Section 153, which assigns responsibility to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for “assisting the President and Secretary of Defense in providing for the strategic direction of the armed forces,” as well as “preparing strategic plans, including plans which conform with resource levels projected by the Secretary of Defense to be available for the period of time for which the plans are to be effective.”²⁶

National military strategies have also been required in the past on a limited basis. The NDAA for FY1991 required the submission of a military strategy report to Congress during fiscal years 1992, 1993, and 1994.²⁷ In contrast to the current mandate, the responsible party was the Secretary of Defense, while the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was to “participate fully” in the development of the report. The report was to be submitted in both classified and unclassified formats; to cover a period of at least 10 years; to be fiscally constrained; and to address a series of specified topics including threats, military plans for meeting them, risks, missions for various components, and acquisition priorities.

While no explicit legislative mandate was in effect at the time, in both 1995 and 1997, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a national military strategy. Both documents clearly stated their “supporting” relationships to higher-level strategic documents. The 1997 *National Military Strategy* stated that it was based on the May 1997 *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* and the 1997 *QDR Report*. The 1995 *National Military Strategy* explained that the 1994 National

²³ See *ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁴ Before the FY2004 NDAA introduced the permanent national military strategy requirement, the FY2000 NDAA amended Title 10 to permanently require an annual report from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff providing the Chairman’s “assessment of the nature and magnitude of the strategic and military risks associated with executing the missions called for under the current National Military Strategy.” The legislation capitalizes “National Military Strategy,” underscoring the assumption of the existence of a document not required by law at that time. See NDAA for FY2000, P.L. 106-65, §1033, which amended Title 10 §153 to include a new subheading (c), later changed to subheading (b).

²⁵ Title 10, U.S. Code, §141(c).

²⁶ Title 10, U.S. Code, §153 (a) (1) and (2).

²⁷ NDAA for FY1991, November 5, 1990, P.L. 101-510, §1032.

Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement had described the relevant national security objectives and “provided the Armed Forces the guidance to shape our military strategy.” Both military strategy documents addressed the strategic environment, national military objectives, military tasks to meet those objectives, and capabilities and forces required to accomplish those tasks.²⁸

Other Strategic Guidance: Mandates and Execution

The security/defense/military pillar of national security strategic guidance is only part of a veritable wealth of national strategic documents broadly related to security concerns. Some but not all of those documents are congressionally mandated.²⁹ As a rule, most formal strategies are unclassified, and they require or imply participation from more than one department or agency. Their scope ranges from multi-faceted concerns, such as national security and intelligence, to specific topics, such as national security personnel development. Typically, written strategies state their relationships to other strategic guidance documents.

In the constellation of strategies, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT)* is one of those whose relationships with other strategies are most clearly defined. The *NSCT* was first issued by President Bush in February 2003, and was then updated in March 2006. As the 2003 *NSCT* explained, it was a subordinate document to the 2002 National Security Strategy, addressing one of the security strategy’s eight major areas, counter-terrorism. The division of labor between the *NSCT* and the *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, the *NSCT* added, was that the homeland strategy addressed “preventing terrorist attacks within the United

²⁸ See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy: A Strategy of Flexible and Selective Engagement*, February 1995; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy: Shape, Respond, Prepare Now — A Military Strategy for a New Era*, 1997.

²⁹ To help illustrate the depth and variety of legislative mandates for strategy, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (December 17, 2004, P.L. 108-458) alone includes the following requirements for strategies: from the Secretary of Homeland Security, a National Strategy for Transportation Security (§4001); from the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, a strategy for improving the conduct of analysis by the CIA, and a strategy for improving human intelligence and other capabilities (§1011); from the Director of the National Counter-Terrorism Center, a “strategy for combining terrorist travel intelligence, operations and law enforcement into a cohesive effort to intercept terrorists, find terrorist travel facilitators, and constrain terrorist mobility domestically and internationally” (§7201); from the President, a strategy for addressing and eliminating terrorist sanctuaries, including, as subsets, a strategy for U.S. engagement with Pakistan, a strategy for U.S. collaboration with the Government of Saudi Arabia, a strategy to “help win the struggle of ideas in the Islamic world,” a strategy to expand outreach to foreign Muslim audiences through broadcast media, and a strategy to promote free universal basic education in the countries of the Middle East” (§7120); also from the President, a five-year strategy for Afghanistan (§7104). The Secretary of State was also advised to “make every effort” to develop a comprehensive strategy for public diplomacy (§7109).

States,” while the *NSCT* was responsible for “identifying and defusing threats before they reach our borders.”³⁰

The two sets of strategies most similar to the security/defense/military pillar of strategies are those concerning homeland security and intelligence. They are all roughly analogous because each is associated with a primary agency of responsibility, each requires execution by multiple agencies, and each has a very broad substantive scope.

Homeland Security

Homeland security strategic guidance, like the homeland security architecture in general, was created in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.³¹ Shortly after 9/11, President Bush created the Office of Homeland Security at the White House and tasked it, as its first responsibility, to produce a national strategy for homeland security. That strategy, issued in July 2002, addressed broad strategic objectives and threats, and proposed specific initiatives to meet those threats in six “critical mission areas.”³²

The 2002 *National Strategy for Homeland Security* suggests, but does not conclusively state, a conceptual dividing line between “homeland” and “national” security responsibilities. For example, the *Strategy’s* first stated objective is to “prevent terrorist attacks within the United States.” Some observers might argue that this indicates that the boundaries of “homeland security” responsibility are the nation’s borders; other observers might contend that preventing terrorist attacks at home requires actions abroad.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002, which codified the organization and responsibilities of the Homeland Security Council (HSC) and created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), did not establish a formal requirement for a homeland security strategy.³³ It required the HSC to provide policy oversight and engage in assessment, but not to craft strategy per se.³⁴

³⁰ See President George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, Chapter III: “Strengthen Alliances to Defeat Global Terrorism and Work to Prevent Attacks Against Us and Our Friends.” See also President George W. Bush, *National Strategy to Combat Terrorism*, February 2003; and President George W. Bush, *National Strategy to Combat Terrorism*, September 2006.

³¹ In the wake of 9/11, President Bush, with Executive Order 13228, of October 8, 2001, established the Homeland Security Council (HSC). Its organization and operations were specified by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 1, of October 29, 2001.

³² Office of Homeland Security, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, July 2002.

³³ See *Homeland Security Act* of 2002, November 25, 2002, P.L. 107-296.

³⁴ It requires the HSC to “assess the objectives, commitments, and risks of the United States in the interest of homeland security and to make resulting recommendations to the President; [and to] oversee and review homeland security policies of the Federal Government and to make resulting recommendations to the President.” *Ibid.*, §904.

In October 2007, the Homeland Security Council issued an updated *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, which addressed the same broad areas as its 2002 predecessor — national objectives, threats, and initiatives.³⁵ The *Strategy* noted that it “complements” other major strategic documents, including the March 2006 *National Security Strategy* and the September 2006 *National Strategy to Combat Terrorism*, without spelling out the relationships among the three strategies as clearly as the 2003 *NSCT* did.³⁶

In 2007, Congress established a new requirement for the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR), on the model of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) at the Department of Defense.³⁷ The legislation requires that the QHSR be conducted every four years, beginning in FY2009, and that a report based on the review be submitted to Congress by December 31 of the year in which the review is conducted.³⁸

According to the legislation, the Secretary of Homeland Security is to conduct the QHSR in conjunction with the heads of other Federal agencies, including the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the Director of National Intelligence; key officials of the Department of Homeland Security; and other relevant governmental and nongovernmental entities, including state, local, and tribal government officials, Members of Congress, private sector representatives, academics, and other policy experts.³⁹

The report based on the QHSR is to be unclassified. The Department of Homeland Security is further instructed to make the report publicly available on its website.⁴⁰

Concerning the relationship between the QHSR and the *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, which might be considered analogous to the relationship between the QDR and the *National Security Strategy*, the legislation may be somewhat confusing to some. The legislation requires that the QHSR be consistent

³⁵ Homeland Security Council, *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, October 2007.

³⁶ The 2007 *National Strategy for Homeland Security* also makes reference to a large number of single-topic strategies, including the *National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel*, the *National Strategy for Maritime Security*, the *National Strategy for Aviation Security*, the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorist Use of Explosives*, the *National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace*, and the *National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals*.

³⁷ See Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, August 3, 2007, P.L. 110-53, §2401, which amended the Homeland Security Act of 2002, November 25, 2002, P.L. 107-296, adding §707 mandating a quadrennial homeland security review.

³⁸ Technically this language concerning the submission date is unclear, because the fiscal year spans more than one calendar year. See amended Homeland Security Act, P.L. 107-296, §707 (a) (1), and (c) (1).

³⁹ See amended Homeland Security Act, P.L. 107-296, §707, (a) (3) (A, B, and C).

⁴⁰ See amended Homeland Security Act, P.L. 107-296, §707, (c) (3).

with the *National Strategy for Homeland Security*.⁴¹ At the same time, the QHSR should “...update, as appropriate, the national homeland security strategy.”⁴² Updating a strategy while remaining consistent with it may sound like an unusual mandate, but the problem may only be semantic. The intent of the legislation seems to be that the QHSR should examine and update the full array of strategic approaches in a manner broadly consistent with the President’s most recently published *Strategy*.⁴³ (Conceivably, the subsequent iteration of the published *Strategy* might reflect conclusions of the most recent QHSR.)

The legislation does not specifically require the QHSR to be consistent with the current *National Security Strategy*, but the requirement for consistency with “appropriate national and Department strategies” might be understood to include the NSS.

The QHSR legislation, like that governing the Quadrennial Defense Review, is quite specific concerning the focus of the review and the contents of the report to be submitted to Congress. The QHSR report is to include a description of threats to national homeland security interests; the national homeland security strategy, including a prioritized list of the critical homeland security missions; a description of required interagency cooperation measures and current preparedness of federal assets; an assessment of DHS organizations, systems, and infrastructure to support the strategy; a discussion of the status of cooperation among federal, state, local, and tribal governments; and an explanation of assumptions used in the review.⁴⁴

Intelligence

The national intelligence architecture was overhauled in the wake of 9/11, through legislation and presidential directives including four executive orders issued in August 2004⁴⁵ and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.⁴⁶ These changes were informed in part by the recommendations provided in July 2004 by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (“the 9/11 Commission”), a congressionally mandated, independent, bipartisan

⁴¹ See amended Homeland Security Act, P.L. 107-296, §707, (b) (1).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ The security/defense/military pillar of strategic guidance has a semantic advantage in that DOD’s QDR and its embedded national defense strategy support a national *security* strategy issued by the White House.

⁴⁴ See amended Homeland Security Act, P.L. 107-296, §707, (c) (2) (A through I).

⁴⁵ The four include “Establishing the President’s Board on Safeguarding Americans’ Civil Liberties,” “Strengthening the Sharing of Terrorism Information to Protect Americans,” “National Counterterrorism Center,” and “Strengthened Management of the Intelligence Community,” available at [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/orders/>].

⁴⁶ Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, December 17, 2004 (P.L. 108-458).

panel.⁴⁷ The guidance did not include a specific formal requirement for “intelligence strategy.”

The intelligence community itself, now led by the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), has initiated two forms of intelligence strategic guidance. In October 2005, DNI issued *The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America: Transformation through Integration and Innovation*. In a May 2006 update to Congress on implementation of the 2004 Intelligence Reform Act, the DNI described issuance of the 2005 *Strategy* as a facet of his responsibility, required by the 2004 Act, to “serve as head of the intelligence community.”⁴⁸

The 2005 *Strategy* names 15 strategic objectives, divided between “strategic objectives” and “enterprise objectives,” each with subset objectives. In each area, the *Strategy* tasks specific offices to craft plans to meet the various subset objectives. The *Strategy* notes that it derives its objectives from the President’s *National Security Strategy*.⁴⁹

That *Strategy*, in turn, drew on a roughly simultaneous quadrennial intelligence community review (QICR). The 2005 *National Intelligence Strategy* noted that it prescribed “enterprise-wide objectives derived from the Quadrennial Intelligence Community Review.”⁵⁰ The QICR is a review process analogous to DOD’s quadrennial defense review. To date, two QICRs have been completed — in 2001 and 2005 — and each resulted in a classified written report.

While no legislation was enacted as a result, there were some congressional efforts in 2005 to establish a requirement for both a “quadrennial intelligence review” and a national intelligence strategy. In its Report on the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2006, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence recommended that by the end of FY2008 the DNI develop a process for a “quadrennial intelligence review” — a “formalized, periodic, and structured review” based on the model of the Defense Department QDR.⁵¹

⁴⁷ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, July 2004, available at [<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/index.htm>].

⁴⁸ See “Report on the Progress of the Director of National Intelligence in Implementing the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004,” May 2006, and Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, December 17, 2004, P.L. 108-458, §1095.

⁴⁹ Director of National Intelligence, *The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America: Transformation through Integration and Innovation*, October 2005.

⁵⁰ Director of National Intelligence, *The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States of America: Transformation through Integration and Innovation*, October 2005. In a June 2006 speech to the Intelligence and National Security Alliance, DNI Ambassador Negroponte mentioned the QICR and its contents twice, as providing vision for the intelligence community’s way forward. See Remarks by the Director of National Intelligence Ambassador John D. Negroponte, “Transforming Intelligence — a Focus on Analysis,” Intelligence and National Security Alliance, June 7, 2006, available at [http://www.dni.gov/speeches/20060607_speech.htm].

⁵¹ See H.Rept. 109-101, Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2006, June 2, 2005, to (continued...)

The committee further proposed that this review “identify the breadth and depth of the threats, [and] the capabilities existing and needed to combat those threats, and better identify the alignment of resources, authorities, and personnel needed to support those required capabilities.” This review would be used, in turn, to help DNI “develop and periodically adjust a national intelligence strategy.” That strategy “would inform the types of information needed to support national priorities and objectives,” which in turn would facilitate determination “about which intelligence discipline, or disciplines, can best provide the required information.” Those decisions, in turn, would inform guidance regarding capabilities development, and allocation of funding among intelligence disciplines.⁵²

Strategic Guidance: Considerations for Congress

Over time, there has been no shortage of debate and commentary about the role of “strategy” in the national security system, including both legislative requirements and execution by the executive branch. This section highlights issues that have been raised in these debates. These considerations may prove useful to Congress for evaluating current performance and proposals for change.

Frequency

Historically, the timelines for submission of strategic documents to Congress have not always been met, even when deadlines are quite specifically articulated in law. A recent example is the submission by the current Bush Administration of only two national security strategies, rather than meeting the annual submission requirement in the 1947 National Security Act as amended by Goldwater-Nichols.

Some observers have suggested that in today’s globalized age, any written document is by definition too static — that agencies need more frequently updated guidance, and that both Congress and the public can gain a more accurate understanding of current Administration intent from public statements and congressional testimony.

Other observers have suggested that while official written strategy has a useful role to play, an annual requirement for national security strategy may be too frequent. Some suggest that the broad contours of the global security environment do not change rapidly enough to warrant a complete overhaul of the nation’s basic security outlook every year. In this view, responses to specific changes in the global environment might be captured, instead, in more specific policies or approaches.⁵³

⁵¹ (...continued)
accompany H.R. 2475.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Army War College strategist Don Snider has recommended a biennial national security strategy. See Don Snider, “The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision,” Strategic Studies Institute, Army War College, second edition, March 15, 1995, available (continued...)

Synchronization of Timelines

In theory, agency-based and specific-issue strategies would derive guidance from, and chronologically follow, recent national security strategy — for example, national security strategy would be followed by national defense strategy, which in turn would be followed by national military strategy. In recent practice, the timeline has not quite worked that way. The 2001 *QDR Report* (with its embedded national defense strategy) was issued in September 2001, before the current Bush Administration issued its first *National Security Strategy* (September 2002). The first *National Military Strategy* did not follow until 2004, and it almost immediately preceded the next *National Defense Strategy*, issued in March 2005, a year ahead of its “accompanying” *QDR Report* (February 2006), and just ahead of a new *National Security Strategy* (March 2006).

In the defense arena, current requirements for submission timelines are fairly well-suited for logical, sequential development of these “nested” strategies. The QDR report and its accompanying defense strategy are due to Congress by the date the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year, at the beginning of an Administration’s second calendar year in office.⁵⁴ The national security strategy for that year is due to Congress on the same day. In theory, the QDR report and defense strategy could draw on the previous year’s national security strategy, required “150 days” after an Administration takes office, and perhaps on the concurrent development process for the second-year national security strategy.

The national military strategy, in turn, is required to be submitted to Congress by February 15 of even-numbered years — that is, just several days after the submission of the national security strategy — and either several days, or two years and several days, after the submission of the QDR report and defense strategy. By these timelines, development of the military strategy could draw on the defense strategy from two or four years earlier, and perhaps on the concurrent defense strategy development process.

⁵³ (...continued)

at [<http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/>]. The “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies has recommended replacing the legislative requirement for an annual national security strategy with one for a quadrennial guidance document (see “Proposals,” below), Center for Strategic and International Studies, Clark A. Murdock and Michele A. Flournoy, Lead Investigators, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report,” July 2005.

⁵⁴ This timeline marks a change from the original permanent QDR mandate, which required submission of the QDR report “not later than September 30 of the year in which the review is conducted,” Title 10 U.S. Code §118(d) as amended by the National Defense Authorization Act of 2000, P.L. 106-65 §901. The Bob Stump National Defense Authorization Act of 2003, P.L. 107-314 §922, amended Title 10 U.S. Code §118(d) to require a QDR report submission date of “not later than the date on which the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year.”

Clear Relationships Among Strategic Documents

Some observers have suggested that the distinctions among the mandates of national security strategic documents, and particularly those for the defense and military strategies, are not completely clear. All three strategic documents — security, defense, and military — are mandated to provide objectives and strategies to meet identified security challenges or opportunities, and to describe the capabilities required to meet those objectives. The security strategy includes all elements of national power — and all relevant agencies, civilian and military — and is thus an umbrella for the DOD-centric defense and military strategies.

The intended relationship between the defense and military strategies is less clear. *The 2004 National Military Strategy (NMS)* stated that it “implements the *National Defense Strategy*” (*NDS*). The *NMS* added that it “derives objectives, missions and capability requirements from an analysis of the [*National Security Strategy*], the *NDS*, and the security environment.”⁵⁵ Its own contribution, in turn, is providing “a set of interrelated military objectives and joint operating concepts” that help Service Chiefs and Combatant Commanders identify required capabilities. It is not completely clear conceptually what further refinement or additions defense objectives might require to become military objectives that senior leaders can use to identify requirements.

Prioritization

Prioritization of objectives and activities by leadership at one level can help leaders at the next subordinate level more appropriately shape their own strategies and target their efforts and resources. The national security strategy could provide such guidance to DOD and its QDR and defense strategy, and those DOD efforts could provide corresponding guidance to the Joint Staff for its military strategy.

As a rule, current strategic documents do not prioritize the objectives or missions they prescribe, nor are they required to do so by law.⁵⁶ The most recent national security strategies include eight or nine focus areas, but all of the areas are implicitly equal in weight. The most recent *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* names four focus areas, all implicitly of equal importance. Such guidance could theoretically be used by subordinate agencies or offices to justify budgeting to achieve a very wide spectrum of capabilities.

Roles and Responsibilities

Strategy at the national level generally addresses areas of effort that may require participation by multiple departments and agencies. In many cases, there might be

⁵⁵ See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, “A Strategy for Today, a Vision for Tomorrow,” 2004, p. 2.

⁵⁶ One exception is the new legislative mandate for the quadrennial homeland security review, described above, whose report must include “a prioritized list of critical homeland security missions.”

multiple agencies that could conceivably accomplish the mission, such as strengthening international partnerships. For such a mission, possible instruments could include military exercises led by the Department of Defense, development assistance programs led by the Agency for International Development, and participation in multi-lateral organizations led by the Department of State, among others. Yet recent national strategies have rarely assigned responsibility for specific tasks to specific agencies.

By assigning responsibility for various missions, national strategy might serve as a tool for leadership to indicate the most appropriate arm of national power to bring to bear in each case — because the “messenger” may be as important as the “message.” Using strategic documents to assign responsibilities might also help agencies best focus their efforts, and might help conserve resources by preventing duplication of effort.

Fiscal Constraints

The national security strategy, the national defense strategy and QDR, and the national military strategy are not required by legislation to be fiscally constrained.⁵⁷ At the Department of Defense, processes have long been in place, under the broad heading “planning, programming, budgeting and execution cycle (PPBE),” to use strategy to inform budget decisions. The PPBE cycle includes the development of classified internal strategic guidance documents that assign responsibilities and set priorities, which are used in turn to inform programming and budgeting.⁵⁸ There is no close analog for translating strategy into budget at the national level.

Competition of Ideas

In general, strategy development can benefit greatly from a healthy and robust competition of ideas. The best-known historical example may be President Eisenhower’s top secret “Project Solarium,” established shortly after Stalin’s death in 1953, to reassess U.S. “containment” policy toward the Soviet Union. The

⁵⁷ One historical exception was the early 1990s temporary national military strategy requirement, see National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991, November 5, 1990, P.L. 101-510, §1032. That legislation required that the Secretary of Defense’s national military strategy report to Congress include the Secretary’s recommendations “for a national military strategy that is both coherent and fiscally constrained” §1032(a)(2)(B). The Secretary was to base his recommendation on a “strategic military plan” by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). In that plan, the CJCS was to lay out the best plan possible for each of “three alternative sets of assumptions about future world conditions and defense funding levels,” in which each set presumed a defense budget decline by a specified amount, over a specified time period. See §1032(b)(1); and (e)(2), (f)(2), and (g)(2).

⁵⁸ PPBE was formerly known as the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS). For a description of these components, see Department of Defense Directive 7045.14, May 22, 1984, “The Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System,” available at [<http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/704514p.pdf>]. The names and formats of the guidance documents produced, and of the bodies constituted within DOD to implement the cycle, have varied over time.

methodology included the formation of three teams of seasoned experts and practitioners, both military and civilian. Each team was assigned a strategy to elaborate and defend. After working for six weeks at the National War College, the teams presented the strongest cases they could muster at a session with the President Eisenhower, attended by the rest of the National Security Council, senior military leaders, and others.⁵⁹

More recently, Congress, when mandating the first quadrennial defense review, also required the Secretary of Defense to establish a “nonpartisan, independent panel” — the National Defense Panel — to assess the review process itself.⁶⁰ Observers note that the legislative mandate, and public voice including congressional testimony, gave the panel an opportunity to shape the review process and its outcomes. The 2006 QDR process was also assisted by the work of an independent panel of defense experts and retired flag officers, although they did not have a legislative mandate, and their assessments were not made publicly available.

No legislative requirement is in place for the use of a “competitive” mechanism to aid the development of national security strategy.

Intended Audience

Strategies required in unclassified form may be nominally intended to inform multiple audiences simultaneously: the executive branch, Congress, the American people, and foreign audiences.

In practice, some observers note, national strategies have typically emphasized the “public diplomacy” function over the mandate to provide guidance within the executive branch. As one observer noted, strategies such as the national security strategy and national defense strategy are “heavy on themes and messages and light on detail.”⁶¹ Referring to the requirement for a national security strategy, the “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project based at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) argued that “... each Administration from President Reagan on has chosen to treat this statute primarily as a requirement to publicly explain and sell its policies rather than an opportunity to undertake a rigorous internal strategic planning process. The result has consistently been a glossy document that

⁵⁹ On Project Solarium and lessons that might be drawn from it, see Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley, “Strategic Planning for National Security: A New Project Solarium,” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Issue 41, 2nd Quarter 2006.

⁶⁰ See NDAA for FY1997, September 23, 1996, P.L. 104-201, §924 (c) (1 and 2). The Panel was also required to conduct an alternative force structure assessment, *ibid.*, (c) (3), and (d).

⁶¹ See LTC Nathan Freier, “The Strategy Deficit,” Strategic Studies Institute, March 20, 2008, available at [<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB863.pdf>]. LTC Freier adds, “None [of the strategies] can purport to involve the detailed articulation of achievable, minimum essential ends, the balanced adjudication of ways and means, and a thorough analysis of the risks associated with action and/or inaction.”

serves a public affairs function, but does little to guide U.S. national security policymaking and resource allocation.”⁶²

It is possible that there are irreconcilable tensions, in terms of classification level, between the need to provide detailed guidance to subordinates who will implement it, and the need to explain — and sell — a strategic vision to broader, potentially skeptical, public audiences. At the Department of Defense, for example, the usual practice is to complement the public, unclassified QDR report and military strategy with internal classified guidance documents that assign specific tasks to offices of primary responsibility.⁶³

Timeframe

As a rule, current security strategies are “present-tense” documents — they describe security challenges and opportunities in the present tense, rather than specifically addressing how those security conditions might be expected to evolve over time. A key exception is the QDR, which is congressionally mandated to anticipate conditions and requirements 20 years into the future.⁶⁴

Some observers stress that a deliberate, longer-term outlook can play an important role by informing preparations that require time, like developing and building sophisticated platforms, or recruiting, educating, and training specialized forces or categories of civilian personnel.

Strategic Guidance: Recent Proposals

A number of observers have suggested updating or amending current legislative requirements to address some of the concerns noted above. This section describes several of the most concrete proposals to date.

⁶² Clark A. Murdock and Michele A. Flournoy, Lead Investigators, “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2005, p. 28.

⁶³ The names, formats, and timelines for delivery of these internal classified guidance documents have evolved over time. For example, the 2006 QDR process directly informed Strategic Planning Guidance and Joint Planning Guidance. Subsequently, as part of a comprehensive effort to rationalize and synchronize internal strategic documents, DOD established Guidance for the Employment of the Force, and Guidance for the Development of the Force.

⁶⁴ Two earlier products by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010*, issued in 1996, and *Joint Vision 2020*, issued in 2000, were intended to provide “conceptual templates” for developing the force and its capabilities, and each looked out to its target year “and beyond.” See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2010*, July 2006, available at [<http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/history/jv2010.pdf>], and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020*, May 2000, available at [<http://www.dtic.mil/jointvision/jvpub2.htm>].

Quadrennial National Security Review

One proposal is that Congress mandate a “quadrennial national security review” (QNSR), as an interagency-level analogue to DOD’s quadrennial defense review. This proposal, in its current form, was put forward by the CSIS “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project and was later echoed by other commentators.⁶⁵

The “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project recommended that Congress amend legislation to replace the current requirement for a national security strategy with a requirement for the more rigorous QNSR.⁶⁶ The QNSR, like the QDR, would be a review process. As articulated by the “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project, it would be led by a senior official designated by the President, and it would involve participation from all departments and agencies concerned with at least some national security issues. It would include “an assessment of the future security environment and the development of national security objectives.” It would produce a strategy for achieving those objectives, including “identifying the capabilities required to implement the strategy and delineating agency roles and responsibilities.”

The proposal to create a quadrennial national security review is quite different from the similar-sounding proposal put forward by the Commission on Smart Power, also based at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, to establish a requirement for a “quadrennial smart power review.”⁶⁷ The “smart power” review, also modeled on the QDR, would address the uses of all “the civilian tools of

⁶⁵ See Clark A. Murdock and Michele A. Flournoy, Lead Investigators, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2005, p. 28. A similar proposal for a Quadrennial Security Review (QSR) was put forward earlier, by the Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM), whose work was mandated by the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994*, November 30, 1994, P.L. 103-160, in Title XIV, “National Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces,” §1401-1411. The QSR, which would be a “comprehensive strategy and force review at the start of each Administration,” and “an interagency activity directed by the National Security Council,” resembles the later QNSR in proposed form. But the substantive focus of the QSR sounds more defense-centric than that of the QNSR. The CORM noted, for example, that the QSR would “... address international political and economic trends, changes in threats and military technology, evolving opportunities for using military force to shape the security environment, resources available for defense, possible adjustments to existing national security policy or strategy, and a diverse set of military force and program options.” See John P. White, Chairman, Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, *Directions for Defense*, May 24, 1995, 4-8, 4-9, and 4-10.

⁶⁶ Murdock and Flournoy, p. 29.

⁶⁷ See Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., co-chairs, “A Smarter, More Secure America,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2007, p. 67. The concept of “smart power” refers to an integration of traditional hard power (the use of military and economic carrots and sticks to achieve desired ends) with soft power (“the ability to attract people to our side without coercion”).

national power.” The proposed “national security” review, by discussing both military and civilian tools, would be broader in scope.⁶⁸

National Security Planning Guidance

A second major proposal is that Congress enact legislation to require the President to issue classified “national security planning guidance.” The proposal was first put forward by the “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” project and was echoed in the 2006 *QDR Report*.⁶⁹ The guidance would be classified, intended to convey intent and direction to subordinate organizations. The guidance would set priorities, and state national security objectives and the approaches and capabilities required to achieve them. It would assign responsibility for specific tasks to specific agencies. It could conceivably also provide specific fiscal guidance. The planning guidance would follow from the national security strategy — or the quadrennial national security review. “Beyond Goldwater-Nichols” recommended that the guidance be issued in the first year of each new administration, and updated biannually after that.

Staffing Strategic Guidance Activities

Some proponents of amending or expanding strategic guidance requirements have observed that adequate personnel currently may not be available to manage and integrate complex, multi-agency reviews or planning processes. One logical locus for such staffing support is the National Security Council (NSC) staff, whose positions give them access to high-level debates, and a systemic-level view above and outside the various equities of individual departments. They are relatively well-placed to help challenge assumptions and to identify gaps. However, as a rule, the daily work of NSC staff has a short-term focus, on crises and other “real-time” requirements.

Therefore, some observers have suggested that should additional strategic guidance requirements be established, expanding the NSC staff, or re-designating the portfolios of some of its personnel, might have to be considered. Two practitioner-observers have gone further, recommending the creation and staffing of a permanent new Interagency Planning and Policy Directorate within the NSC staff, led by a Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Planning and Policy, who would be dual-hatted as Deputy Director for National Security at the Office of Management and Budget in order to ensure close linkage between planning and budgeting. The

⁶⁸ The fact that the Smart Power Commission proposes that the “smart power review” include only “civilian tools” is somewhat confusing, given that by their own definition, “smart power” refers to the integration of soft power with traditional “hard power” — including the use of the military.

⁶⁹ See Clark A. Murdock and Michele A. Flournoy, Lead Investigators, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era, Phase 2 Report*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2005, p. 29, and Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, February 6, 2006, p. 85.

authors further recommend that the Directorate be subject to congressional oversight, and that the leadership position be subject to Senate confirmation.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Lt Col Sami Said, USAF, and Lt Col Cameron Hold, USAF, “A Time for Action: The Case for Interagency Deliberate Planning,” John F. Kennedy School of Government, National Security Program, May 7, 2008.