

The Defense Inheritance: Challenges and Choices for the Next Pentagon Team

The next U.S. commander in chief will face the most daunting defense inheritance in generations when he takes the oath of office in January. Not since the Johnson-Nixon handoff 40 years ago has the country faced such a challenging wartime transition. Ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will force the new president to make early and consequential decisions regarding the U.S. approach toward both conflicts as well as the search for al Qaeda's top leadership in the lawless frontier lands along the Afghan-Pakistani border.

President John McCain or Barack Obama will inherit a military that, although still the best in the world, is experiencing profound strains after nearly seven years of constant warfare. A young person entering the combat branches of the Army or Marine Corps in the months following the September 11 terrorist attacks has almost certainly deployed numerous times to Afghanistan and/or Iraq. An entire generation of young military personnel has endured years of difficult and heroic service and sacrifice. Their morale is high, but they and their families are tired.

The next secretary of defense will inherit a department that also is under enormous pressure. The constant imperative to support forward-deployed forces engaged in current operations has strained the ability of the military services and their civilian leaders to adequately plan for a complex and uncertain future. The high financial costs of two wars, rapidly increasing personnel obligations, and huge cost overruns in most major procurement programs have caused Pentagon spending to skyrocket. With the U.S. economy sliding toward recession and the national deficit and foreign debt rising to unprecedented levels, the next president

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and secretary of defense will need to avoid strategic overstretch and make difficult decisions about where to place emphasis and how to prudently balance risk.

The next Pentagon team will thus be faced with the dual challenge of presenting the new commander in chief with the best possible advice on key current wartime decisions while providing the support and leadership necessary to prepare U.S. armed forces for a future far different from the one for which they were optimized. This challenging endeavor will require forming a comprehensive and strategic view in order to chart a way forward.

Much More than Iraq

With its ground forces tied down in Iraq and its national treasury depleted by a trillion dollars or more for the war, the United States has suffered from strategic myopia in recent years, overlooking other important developments in the international system. For example, China is rising and altering the balance of power in Asia, a revanchist Russia empowered by petrowealth is flexing its muscle, and the Indian Ocean region is rapidly becoming a global center of gravity.¹ According to Francis Fukuyama, “American preoccupation with Iraq limits Washington’s options in other parts of the world and has distracted the attention of senior policy makers from other regions such as Asia that in the long run are likely to present greater strategic challenges.”² Richard Haass recently argued that, “[b]y both what it has done and what it has failed to do, the United States has accelerated the emergence of alternative power centers in the world and has weakened its own position relative to them.”³ Moreover, the continued rise of transnational challenges, such as radical Islamist ideology, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to hostile states as well as potentially to nonstate actors, and global climate change, will pose daunting security problems for the United States and its allies.

The implications of current military trends also reveal cause for concern. During the war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, the Israel Defense Forces were stunned by Hizballah’s advanced battlefield tactics and weaponry, including the successful use of an advanced ground-to-ship missile and anti-tank weapons.⁴ The Israeli experience in Lebanon has become a textbook case of the kind of hybrid warfare that many defense analysts believe will be a defining feature of the future security environment.

In June 2008, Russia declared that it would dramatically increase its naval operations in the Arctic, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans to demonstrate its expanding military might.⁵ As melting Arctic ice opens new year-round shipping routes and as rising oil prices make resource exploitation more practical, Russia, which provocatively planted a titanium flag on the seabed underneath the North Pole in August 2007, is making aggressive claims on the far north.⁶

On January 11, 2007, China destroyed one of its aging weather satellites with a ground-launched missile, demonstrating its developing antisatellite capabilities. One year later, on February 20, 2008, U.S. armed forces destroyed one of its own ailing satellites, ostensibly to prevent its toxic fuel from injuring anyone on the ground.⁷ The United States objected to the Chinese launch, while both China and Russia protested the U.S. operation.⁸ In June 2008, India, citing China's emerging space capabilities, declared its intention to develop a military program for space. One of India's most senior military officers declared, "With time we will get sucked into a military race to protect our space assets and inevitably there will be a military contest in space. In a life-and-death scenario, space will provide the advantage."⁹ With the United States, its Western allies, and several rising powers increasingly dependent on space in the pursuit of their military and economic interests, 2008 may in hindsight come to mark a turning point in the debate over the militarization of space.

It has been 40 years since the country has faced such a challenging wartime transition.

The digital realm is also a likely venue for future conflict. A spate of recent attacks on U.S. defense computers and even those of several members of Congress have been publicly linked to China.¹⁰ The Department of Defense claims that China is building capabilities for information warfare and recently created a new cyberspace military command charged with preserving the freedom of access and commerce in cyberspace.

Rising powers such as China, India, Russia, and South Korea continue to invest heavily in naval capabilities, portending a future with many blue-water navies on the high seas, those that can project power far from their home shores.¹¹ The abilities of these rising maritime forces have already shown startling developments, including improvements in submarine capabilities and ballistic missiles that can attack major ships.¹² In 2006 near Okinawa, an advanced Chinese submarine surfaced very close to the U.S. carrier *Kitty Hawk* before being detected, leading Robert Kaplan to conclude that the incident "might prove to be a better harbinger of the future than anything going on in Iraq."¹³ With 90 percent of global commerce traveling by sea, the rise of new naval powers will test the ability of the United States to maintain stability in the world's oceans, which Alfred Thayer Mahan in 1890 called "a great highway ... a wide common."¹⁴

Also worrisome are broader systemic trends, such as climate change and increased competition for resources such as energy, food, and water, that will not only strain relations among great powers, but also put pressure on weaker

states that will struggle to sustain both sovereignty and stability.¹⁵ Recent food riots in Asia sparked by rising grain and commodity prices linked to rising oil prices are harbingers of the type of complex global challenges shaping the security environment.¹⁶

These examples only scratch the surface of some of the significant defense trends taking shape around the world. The nature of emerging challenges will require that U.S. policymakers, particularly those tasked with articulating defense priorities, remain focused on what the exigencies of current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq demand as well as on what threats and opportunities lie beyond the horizon.

Broken Budgets

The next president will simultaneously face enormous budgetary pressures due to slowing economic growth; the spiraling costs of mandatory spending programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid as baby boomers begin to retire; and growing public and congressional intolerance for increases in the federal deficit.¹⁷ Because defense expenditures represent about one-half of U.S. discretionary spending, it will likely be in the crosshairs of those looking to cut federal spending to pay for entitlements, cut the deficit, or both.

Additionally, alarm bells are ringing throughout the U.S. defense community as the realization sinks in that the Defense Department is facing the makings of a “perfect storm.” Runaway operations and maintenance costs due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; soaring personnel obligations; enormous reset, recapitalization, and modernization needs; intentional growth in the size of the Army and Marine Corps; and the eventual decline of wartime supplemental spending will all combine to require the Pentagon and Congress to make some very difficult choices.¹⁸

Defense procurement expert John Christie points out that “[g]rowth rates for unit costs of major weapons systems are greater than those for total defense procurement, total defense spending, and the gross domestic product.” If these historic trends are not addressed, he argues, U.S. armed forces will eventually cease to be “a significant influence in world events because of shrinking force structure.”¹⁹ Put another way, the Pentagon risks its very relevance by continuing to spend more and more acquisition dollars for fewer and fewer systems. To take but three examples, the costs of the Army’s “Future Combat Systems” family of armored vehicles have escalated 54 percent to \$131 billion since its inception; the Air Force’s F-22A Raptor tactical fighter unit costs have escalated 177 percent while the number to be purchased has decreased by 71 percent; and before the recent decision to cut the program, the Navy had underestimated the cost of its planned purchase of 10 advanced DDG-

1000 destroyers by 60 percent, from \$17.4 billion to \$28 billion.²⁰ The Defense Department cannot afford to continue hemorrhaging taxpayer dollars because of its broken acquisition system.

This budgetary inheritance will put several fundamental questions on the table for the next administration: How much should the United States spend on defense?²¹ In a time of war, should the next president raise taxes on those Americans who can most afford a measure of sacrifice? To date, neither the Pentagon's civilian leadership, the military services, nor Congress has been able to effectively answer the question of how much is enough.²² The next president and his Pentagon team will have to do so early and definitively, making some exceedingly tough calls on strategy and resources.

'Hybrid warfare' will be a defining feature of the future security environment.

Balancing Current and Future Priorities

In light of the strategic and budgetary inheritance outlined above, the next Pentagon team will be forced to make difficult choices on competing priorities. These decisions will involve determining how to balance strategic risk in three different ways. The first challenge is to determine how to allocate risk among current strategic priorities such as the war in Iraq, operations in Afghanistan, the global campaign against terrorism, and the reduction of strains on the U.S. military.

The second involves deciding how to allocate risk when investing in capabilities for the future. For example, how much emphasis should be placed on developing U.S. capabilities for irregular warfare relative to capabilities for countering high-end asymmetric threats or combating WMD proliferation?

The third and most challenging task is balancing current and future priorities. What resources should be devoted to current operations and maintenance accounts versus investment accounts to develop and procure new generations of weapons systems?²³ There is, of course, no correct answer to the question of how to balance risk in each of these three dimensions, but priority setting and risk management must be central pillars of U.S. defense strategy if it is to be useful in guiding tough choices on resource allocation.²⁴

To balance risk both within and between the present and future security environments, the next Pentagon team must carefully assess the nature of the opportunities and threats that the United States faces and make judgments about what the next president and his successors may ask of the U.S. military. In so doing, they should seek to avoid falling into the trap of framing

the debate in overly simplistic terms, such as the need to prepare for irregular warfare versus the need to prepare for wars with rising regional powers. This is a false choice, as U.S. armed forces must be prepared for both.

Furthermore, future conflicts are likely to defy such simple categorizations. In *Another Bloody Century*, Professor Colin Gray argues that there is likely to be a “blurring of warfare categories. The convenient binary distinction between regular and irregular warfare frequently is going to be much less clear in practice than it is conceptually or in law.”²⁵ Rupert Smith, a retired British general, argued in his influential volume

The Utility of Force that modern war is shifting “from armies with comparable forces doing battle on a field to strategic confrontation between a range of combatants, not all of which are armies, and using different types of weapons, often improvised.”²⁶

Future wars are likely to take on a hybrid character in which adversaries mix traditional, irregular, disruptive, and catastrophic means

in order to best exploit perceived weakness.²⁷ This view of the likely character of future conflict is being increasingly adopted by military services. The U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard released a new maritime strategy in 2007 that concluded that “conflicts are increasingly characterized by a hybrid blend of traditional and irregular tactics, decentralized planning and execution, and non-state actors using both simple and sophisticated technologies in innovative ways.”²⁸ The Marine Corps released an official strategy in July 2008 arguing that “[h]ybrid conflicts are assessed as the *most likely* forms of conflict facing the United States.... Because of our conventional superiority, adversaries will seek more indirect forms of conflict.”²⁹

This broad and diverse range of threats will pull U.S. force development in very different directions, and continuing to emphasize capabilities for high-end conventional warfare misses both present and future marks. The U.S. military must develop and sustain capabilities to succeed along the full spectrum of conflict. Given the dearth of purely conventional threats on the horizon, however, U.S. armed forces should focus their preparation on dealing with asymmetric challenges at both ends of the conflict spectrum. This includes future conflicts in which adversaries aim to exploit weakness at the low end of the conflict spectrum, such as the use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers by insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as at the high end, with states employing more advanced capabilities, such as sophisticated anti-air, -satellite or -ship weapons or perhaps even weapons of mass destruction to deny access or otherwise impede U.S. military operations. The implications

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of such a shift in focus will be substantial and will likely increase the priority given to areas such as improving performance in counterinsurgency and stability operations; ensuring the ability to rapidly project and sustain power from the air or sea in the face of antiaccess threats; developing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities further; and protecting the critical information networks that support deployed forces.

One of the problems in the U.S. defense community is that as soon as there is a hint that today's forces may not be appropriately sized or shaped for the emerging threat environment, policymakers, analysts, and business leaders will immediately begin arguing over specific weapons systems and programs. This reaction is understandable but insufficient. The vital interim step between defining objectives and allocating resources is articulating the strategy-driven challenges for which the military must prepare. Military officers charged with organizing, training, and equipping their forces rightly ask, "What do you want us to be able to do?" It is a fair, indeed vital question. For example, a critical question for the Army and Marine Corps concerns how to balance between preparing for the kinds of postconflict stability operations seen in Afghanistan and Iraq while ensuring that the war-fighting skills critical to success in the early phases of both wars do not atrophy. The Navy and Air Force are also dealing with the question of how to properly sustain their superiority in their respective domains in light of the investment strategies of other rising powers while ensuring that they provide the capabilities needed for today's wars. Equally important is the question, "When I don't have enough resources to do everything equally well, what should I prioritize, and where should I manage a degree of risk?" Unfortunately, the answers that they get from civilian leaders are often unclear. Early in its term, the next administration will therefore need to give priority to articulating a new national security strategy that provides U.S. armed forces with clear guidance on the core missions it should be able to perform. The next defense team must be clear about the options they want the U.S. military to be able to provide to the president now and in the future.

In the meantime, the Pentagon is currently conducting a comprehensive review of the military's roles, missions, and functions—the statutory foundations that define the basic purposes and core responsibilities of each of the services and unified combatant commands.³⁰ Although such reviews have been conducted previously, the current effort is likely the most important since the post–World War II struggle to unify the armed forces and create an independent Air Force. Under consideration are such critical issues as how to manage the dramatic growth in demand for unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) systems and surveillance platforms, organize U.S. military cyberspace capabilities, manage the complex task of moving troops and material within and between different theaters, ensure relative harmony in irregular warfare ca-

pabilities between special operations forces and the Army and Marine Corps, and assess the extent to which military services have excessive overlapping capabilities.³¹ As the next administration takes office around the time of the review's release, it will likely take the review's conclusions as important input to its early review of the fiscal year 2010 budget and to the next Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).

The Defense Agenda Ahead

Once a new administration articulates the contours of its national security strategy and provides strategic guidance to the military on priorities, the next and most challenging step will be to translate this strategic guidance into specific judgments about how to size and shape the force. This process is not just a matter of determining the overall numbers of Army brigade combat teams or Navy carrier battle groups; equally important is determining the best mix of capabilities within and across the services.

Developing the right set of criteria to size and shape the U.S. military has posed no small challenge since the end of the Cold War. From the Clinton administration's 1993 criterion that U.S. armed forces be able to fight and win two nearly simultaneous, major regional conflicts to the need in recent years to articulate specific requirements for homeland security, deterrence, combat operations, and long-term stability operations, how the United States defines overall military requirements has been steadily evolving.³² The next defense team should continue to refine and clarify these requirements in ways that can meaningfully guide concrete choices about force development.³³

Given the expansive nature of the national security challenges and the contracting budgetary outlook for defense outlays, the next secretary of defense will have to confront some excruciatingly tough choices. The new team will have an extensive list of 10 "must tackle" issues to address in their first year and beyond.

WHITHER U.S. GROUND FORCE EXPANSION?

Driven by the relentlessly high operational tempos of the last several years and the resulting strains on the forces, the Bush administration belatedly decided in 2007 to expand the size of the active duty Army by 65,000 personnel and the Marine Corps by 27,000 personnel at an estimated cost of \$108 billion over the 2007–2013 period, with recurring costs of \$14 billion per year thereafter.³⁴ The next secretary of defense will have to decide whether to continue with this plan. The new administration must assess the future security environment and the demands it will likely place on the nation's ground forces. Does a force expansion plan that was designed principally to increase dwell

time between deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq yield the right mix of capabilities for a future beyond Iraq?

This is a question not only of how many soldiers the United States may need in the future but, more importantly, what kind of soldiers it may need. For example, the centerpiece of the Army's growth is the addition of six more brigade combat teams to the active duty force. The next secretary of defense will need to determine whether this is the best use of the Army's additional end strength or whether more of the Army's growth should be devoted to support capabilities, such as civil affairs, psychological operations, engineers, military police, and surveillance assets, which have persistently been in high demand and short supply since the end of the Cold War. Making this determination will require an assessment of the types of missions the next administration believes the Army and Marine Corps should be able to perform and some tough calls as to how to prioritize and allocate risk within their budgets.

How much is enough?

FUTURE MARITIME CAPABILITIES

The future security environment will pose enduring and new challenges for the nation's naval forces. The United States will continue to rely on the Navy to protect global sea lines of communication essential to the world economy and to the country's continued prosperity, shape the international environment in ways favorable to U.S. interests, deter aggression and coercion, and, if necessary, facilitate the projection of U.S. power to defeat adversaries in critical regions. It will have to undertake these enduring missions in the face of a number of new challenges, from the development of new anti-ship and antisubmarine capabilities to the emergence of transnational threats such as terrorism and piracy in the littorals.

The Navy does not yet have the range or depth of capabilities it needs for the future, and its plans to build a 313-ship fleet have come under fire by analysts as unrealistic.³⁵ The next defense team will need to take a fresh look at the Navy's requirements and plans in light of the future security environment with two objectives in mind: better connecting the demands of the new maritime strategy with the Navy's investment plans and putting the Navy's shipbuilding programs on a more sound and sustainable footing.

REBALANCING THE AIR FORCE

Since the end of the Cold War, new priority missions have emerged to compete with the Air Force's more traditional emphasis on precision strike and global

power projection. In the last 15 years, the Air Force's abilities to provide critical enablers such as surveillance aircraft, UAVs, airlift capacity, and tankers to the joint force have become even more crucial. During the same period, the Air Force has come to be designated as the lead service for emerging domains such as space and cyberspace. The practical implications of these developments are profound, if rarely acknowledged. Without these essential capabilities that the

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Air Force provides, the rest of the joint force could not get to the fight, see the enemy, communicate with one another, or strike with persistence and precision.

The Air Force budget is nevertheless on the verge of being broken. After years of giving top priority to investments in the modernization of its tactical fighter aircraft, such as the F-22 and Joint Strike Fighter, the Air Force is experienc-

ing a profound recapitalization crisis in areas such as tankers, resorting to using aging aircraft well beyond their planned service lives; a growing debate over whether to develop or delay a new strategic bomber; and resources that have not kept pace with the growth in its responsibilities in other areas, as is the case with UAVs, space, and cyberspace. The next defense team should encourage the Air Force to articulate a comprehensive vision of its roles and missions and help it rebalance its program and budget accordingly.

DEVELOPING CONCEPTS OF OPERATIONS FOR NEW MISSION AREAS

The next secretary of defense will need to ensure that the Defense Department develops new concepts of operations and long-range plans for addressing emerging missions in new domains, particularly in space and cyberspace. The U.S. military relies heavily on a networked architecture of space-based assets to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance, collect and pass information, communicate between units and among levels of command, strike targets, and avoid fratricide and collateral damage on the battlefield. The emergence of new threats to this architecture, such as China's development of a new anti-satellite capability, requires developing new concepts of operations to ensure that this network of U.S. space-based assets is secure and resilient.

Determining how best to protect this network and to ensure continuity of operations in the event of an attack will undoubtedly be a top priority for the next Pentagon team. Similarly, as the United States finds itself under attack in cyberspace on a daily basis, the next administration will need to work with the private sector and invest senior leaders' time and attention in developing concepts and plans for the conduct of defensive and potentially offensive cyber operations.

COUNTERING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Weapons of mass destruction have become asymmetric weapons of choice for a number of potential adversaries, sought by actors ranging from emerging regional powers such as Iran to nonstate actors such as al Qaeda. Although U.S. policy has identified nuclear nonproliferation and keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists as top policy priorities, the reality is that counterproliferation programs and spending have not kept pace with this lofty rhetoric. It will therefore fall to the next president to assess the strengths and shortfalls of current U.S. efforts to stem proliferation, prevent nuclear terrorism, and deal with the challenge of nuclear-armed regional adversaries and to develop a plan for addressing the most critical gaps in capabilities.

REDUCING THE U.S. NUCLEAR POSTURE

Although the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons has gained new traction of late,³⁶ the United States will continue to need a reliable nuclear deterrent in the meantime. There is, however, a growing consensus that the United States can and should rely less on nuclear weapons in its overall defense posture and move toward a smaller arsenal. It will fall to the next administration to determine whether the United States should pursue further reductions in its nuclear stockpile and, if so, how these should be pursued (e.g., in formal arms control negotiations with Russia or via reciprocal unilateral moves); whether and how to reduce the alert posture of its remaining forces; what kinds of hedges to maintain to ensure the United States could respond to any unforeseen or destabilizing developments in the nuclear arena; and, finally, how to maintain the human capital and infrastructure necessary to sustain a safe, secure, reliable, and effective arsenal. Recent incidents involving the mishandling of nuclear weapons and components, coupled with the imminent retirement of a generation of nuclear weapons experts from U.S. national laboratories, only underscore the importance of directing some senior-level attention to this matter.³⁷

REEXAMINING THE U.S. GLOBAL MILITARY POSTURE

When the Bush administration came into office, it undertook a sweeping review of where U.S. military forces were deployed and stationed around the world. This review yielded a number of decisions to realign the U.S. global force posture with the new realities of the post-Cold War world, and many of the proposed changes have already occurred or are underway.³⁸ Yet, the review was completed before the September 11 attacks and the Iraq war, both of which have fundamentally reshaped the strategic landscape for the United States.

In light of these key events, the next administration should reexamine the posture plans that it will inherit and determine whether and how these plans must be adapted to new or emerging realities. For example, how should the need to contain and counter growing Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf shape U.S. military posture in the Middle East region? Is a more distributed global posture needed to support a sustained campaign against violent extremism over the coming decades? What kind of posture would best support a long-term U.S. commitment to help build the security capacities of key allies and partners in critical regions? Answers to these questions will help the Army and Marine Corps decide whether and how to shape their forces for long-term training and advisory missions in pre- or post-conflict environments. They will also help the Air Force and Navy prioritize the relative

The choice is not irregular warfare versus wars with rising regional powers.

importance of forward presence in critical regions versus the ability to project power over long ranges from the United States. Although many of the changes wrought by the Bush administration may still make sense, it is important that the next administration review additional ones in light of changed realities.

SUSTAINING THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE

Multiple factors have combined in recent years to make recruiting and retaining the highest-quality personnel for the U.S. armed forces increasingly challenging. For starters, only three in 10 young Americans meet the military's health, educational, and moral standards.³⁹ At the same time, both the Army and Marine Corps are in the process of growing, which means that they need to bring in more recruits as well as keep a higher percentage of their ranks each year. As a result of this combination of factors and no doubt others, the Army has accepted a larger percentage of recruits who lack a high school diploma as well as a larger percentage that required waivers for medical, educational, or past criminal history reasons.⁴⁰

Given these challenges and the compelling need to sustain an all-volunteer force, the next administration should establish a high-level, bipartisan commission to undertake a comprehensive review of the terms of service. Such a review should include a reexamination of several policies, including eligibility to serve, assessing the place of women in combat, gays in the military, and service opportunities for non-U.S. citizens; the nature of incentives offered to attract people with needed skills; more flexible service contracts that would enable those who serve to move more easily between the active duty military,

the reserves, and the private sector; and the value and potential impact of a presidential call to national service.

FIXING DYSFUNCTIONAL MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

Even if the next defense team steps up to these challenges and makes a series of wise judgment calls about how to set priorities and manage risk, they will inherit dysfunctional—some would say broken—processes inside the Defense Department that will complicate or even undermine their ability to implement decisions effectively. The next secretary of defense should pay particular attention to reforming the Pentagon's management processes in at least four critical areas: concept development, requirements definition, acquisition, and personnel and force management.⁴¹ In each of these areas, he will have to choose his bureaucratic battles, particularly early in his tenure when a host of other strategic issues will compete for attention and he will have limited “money in the bank” with key stakeholders whose cooperation he will need to secure in order to implement meaningful reform. The first step in each case will be to review current processes to determine what is working well and what is not, paying particular attention to how incentive structures might be changed to encourage better performance in those areas that are most in need of reform.

IMPROVING INTERAGENCY CAPACITY AND UNITY OF EFFORT

The Defense Department does not operate in a vacuum. More often than not, its ability to contribute to achieving the nation's strategic objectives depends on the performance and cooperation of other parts of the U.S. government. Two particular problems have plagued interagency operations from the first post-Cold War intervention in Somalia to present-day operations in Iraq: the absence of sufficient operational capacity in the civilian agencies of the U.S. government and the lack of processes and mechanisms to effectively integrate the actions of multiple agencies to achieve unity of effort across the U.S. government.

Although building civilian capacity and achieving greater unity of effort will require the next president, working with Congress, to undertake a series of reforms that lie far outside the Pentagon's purview, the Defense Department can help the next administration advance these objectives by offering its capabilities and expertise in ways that support meaningful reform, such as offering military planners to train and work side by side with planners in other agencies, offering training and education facilities as potential hosts of new interagency courses and programs, and providing critical enablers to interagency task forces or headquarters in operations, such as secure command and control architectures, security, transportation, and trained personnel to

augment staffs. The Pentagon can also provide critical advice and support to congressional efforts to institute reform.

Although not the only difficult issues the next defense team will have to tackle early in its tenure, these issues are certainly representative of the kinds of strategic decisions that will await the new secretary of defense, given the daunting national security inheritance and the perfect budgetary storm looming on the horizon.

The Necessity of Stewardship and Partnership

When the next secretary of defense sets foot in the Pentagon, he will need an extraordinary degree of vision and leadership to deal effectively with this challenging defense inheritance. Particularly important will be a willingness and ability to make tough choices that many of his predecessors have failed to make or have chosen to kick down the road. Nevertheless, there are no easy answers. Grappling with these strategic and budgetary realities will require

time, analysis, deliberation, and no small amount of political courage on the part of civilian and military leaders alike. This article has attempted to frame the defense inheritance as a series of priority issues for the next administration. It has also sought to highlight the importance of framing these difficult decisions in terms of how to prioritize and balance risk in order to strengthen U.S. defense amidst changing budgetary realities.

The new civilian leaders in the Pentagon must adopt an ethic of responsible stewardship.

Regardless of their political viewpoints or strategic priorities, the new civilian leaders in the Pentagon must adopt an ethic of responsible stewardship that places the need to help restore and renew a stressed force on equal footing with the need to make choices about how to employ the military in the pursuit of U.S. interests. They must be stewards of the institution, not just users of the instrument. Additionally, civilian defense leaders must embrace a commitment to a healthy civil-military partnership that remains vital to a strong United States. The next secretary of defense would do well to treat the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the service chiefs, and other key military leaders as indispensable partners and stakeholders in navigating the troubled waters ahead. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs will also play a particularly important role in putting this relationship on the right footing during the transition. For their part, the service chiefs will need to live up to their roles as truly joint chiefs, for if each of the services tries to optimize for its own narrow interests, they will collectively fall far short of what is needed to protect and advance the nation's interests at a time of great

challenge and consequence. Critical to success will be a civil-military team that puts the needs of the nation first and is willing to make the tough trade-offs necessary to best manage the defense inheritance. It is a troubled bequest, and the next Pentagon team must rise to the challenge.

Notes

1. See Henry Kissinger, "The Three Revolutions," *Washington Post*, April 7, 2008, p. A17.
2. Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 182.
3. Richard N. Haass, "The Age of Nonpolarity," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (May/June 2008): 50.
4. See Andrew Exum, "Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment," *Policy Focus*, no. 63 (December 2006), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/download.php?file=PolicyFocus63.pdf>.
5. See Martin Sieff, "Russia Defense Watch: Flexing Arctic Power," United Press International, June 11, 2008, http://www.upi.com/Security_Industry/2008/06/11/Russia_Defense_Watch_Flexing_Arctic_power/UPI-24461213224206; "Russia Plans Arctic Military Exercises," *Chicago Tribune*, June 25, 2008, p. 11; Rowan Scarborough, "Russian Flights Smack of Cold War," *Washington Times*, June 26, 2008, p. A1; Adam Blomfield, "Russia Plans Military Build-up in the Arctic," *Daily Telegraph*, June 12, 2008, p. 17.
6. See Scott G. Borgerson, "Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 63–77. See also J. Michael McConnell, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Armed Services Committee," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, February 27, 2008, p. 28.
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