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The Project on National Security Reform:
Overview and Relevance to Current Public Policy Issues and
Trends

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Introduction by Professor Allison Frendak

Globalization and threats posed by weak, failing, and failed states have propelled the United States into a new age of national security. Chris Jonas details a Washington, DC-based initiative, The Project on National Security Reform (PNSR), and its efforts to identify the implications posed by our current national security system's inability to act cohesively across departments and agencies and how this might be corrected. The paper is well-researched and informed by the author's participation in a PNSR working group as an intern.

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Introduction

Threats to national security in the United States have traditionally come from other powerful states or regional actors operating at the highest levels of political authority. With the emerging trends of globalization, the propensity for failed or weak states to produce threats to the United States and the world has grown. With the advent of the Information Age, the ability of a single individual or group of individuals to exhibit hard power tactics for political purposes on a global stage has also increased dramatically. In addition, the very essence of national security has expanded to include domestic, regional, environmental, health, technological, and financial issues.[1]

In this new age of national security, measures must be taken to better equip key states, like the U.S., to handle the strategic and logistical challenges of providing national security to its citizens and thereby better serving its vital interests. To this end, the Project on National Security Reform (PNSR) was established in Washington, D.C. to study and identify the potential implications stemming from the national security system in its current state and to make recommendations for reform, ultimately paving the way for a new National Security Act of 2008. This ambitious project is focused primarily on the capabilities of the current system to act cohesively across a wide spectrum of agencies and departments.

Project Outset

One of the main precursors to this initiative was the Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986. This legislation proved to be a successful attempt to reform the structure and processes of the Department of Defense to improve its abilities to gather

and disseminate information to the President and his staff and vice-versa. Before Goldwater-Nichols, all branches of the United States Military were essentially operating autonomously, with specific sets of functions being used to accomplish separate missions. Furthermore, "the services wielded their influence more to protect their independence and prerogatives than to develop multi-service commands capable of waging modern warfare."[2]

With power being streamlined through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under the Goldwater-Nichols Act, the military became integrated under one set of commanders. This produced many significant changes in the way the US military was able to plan, engage, and assess various aspects of military combat. The First Gulf War was the first "in-theater" example of the new and improved military capabilities. The operational success of the war validated the concerns of the parties that had pushed for the legislation five years earlier. As James R. Locher III notes, "The Act has attained most of the objectives established for it, helping to transform and revitalize the American military profession in the process."[3] PNSR is seeking to develop and promote legislation that would have a similar impact on the entire national security system.

Project Structure

The Project is focused on the space between the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and Cabinet Secretaries.[4] It is not, therefore, overtly concerned with the functioning of individual departments and agencies, but rather how those departments and agencies interact.[5] The Project is tasked with examining the history of the national security of the United States and ascertaining how and why it took its current form.[6] The

Project will then identify specific problems or areas of concern in the national security system paying particular attention to problems that inhibit the system's ability to act cohesively and integrate all instruments of national power. After the root problems have been identified and scrutinized by leading experts in the field, the Project will finally offer an array of possible solutions or other alternatives to the current system.[7] The culmination of these efforts will be compiled and ideally developed in to a new National Security Act of 2008, the effects of which would take place before the next Presidential inauguration.

The Project on National Security Reform will be structured around five basic pillars. The first and arguably most important in terms of guiding and setting the tone for the Project will be "Outreach and Problem Definition." This will involve identifying and contacting all the actors that have a role in providing national security for the United States and identifying existing reform efforts within those specific entities.[8] This phase of the Project runs from April-July 2007 and it will begin the process of defining the principle problems inherent to the national security system.

The second pillar, "Analysis of Deficiencies in the National Security System," will include a comprehensive, non-partisan study of the history of the national security system. These efforts will be conducted by nine Working Groups, each headed by a working group leader who holds considerable experience in their respective subject.[9] This study will provide an analytical framework for understanding the key deficiencies in the interagency component of the U.S. national security system.[10]

The next pillar or phase of the Project is "Developing Mechanisms for Reform." This involves the essential aspect of garnering support through Congressional leadership.

It will become imperative for any attempt at national security reform to also look at and seek alternatives for restructuring the law-making and oversight capabilities within Congress and the Senate. Congressional leadership should and will be heavily involved in this facet of the Project. There are many challenges to interagency national security affairs within Congress. Working with members of Congress, the Senate, and their staffs, PNSR will examine issues concerning oversight, authorization and appropriation, committees and their jurisdictions, and House and Senate rules.[11] Ultimately, PNSR will propose mechanisms for addressing these issues, a function that will continue until the termination of the Project.

The fourth pillar dovetails with the last aspect of the third pillar. "Formulation of Recommendations" will be a critical stage of the Project that will not be able to get underway until the conclusion of the study-phases of the Project. Taking the lead during this stage will be the Executive Secretariat working in combination with the Legal Working Group to integrate the conclusions from the analysis of the other nine working groups.[12] The results of this integration process will produce specific recommendations, formulating the final outcomes of the Project.[13]

The fifth and final phase of the Project on National Security Reform is "Support to Implementation Process." At this time it is difficult to tell what capacity PSNR affiliates and staff or other interested parties will serve during this phase of the Project but it is thought that PNSR will play a role in seeing out the implementation of its recommendations. PNSR's main function will be to support the appropriate congressional committees and executive branch leadership in acting on the recommendations formulated during the Project's preceding stages.[14]

Working Groups

The Project on National Security Reform is divided in to 12 Working Groups that will each address different areas of national security. The groups will conduct research and analysis, formulate recommendations, and finally provide support for the implementation process. The twelve groups are: Overarching Issues; Case Studies; Vision and Guiding Principles; Strategy, Policy, and Planning Processes; Structure; Human Capital (People); Knowledge Management; Resources; Congressional Oversight; Congressional Mechanisms for Reform; Legal Affairs; and Implementation.[15] These groups are discussed below.

Overarching Issues – The Project on National Security Reform is a comprehensive study by nature. This necessitates the work of an overarching group to facilitate the compilation of the Project's various findings and conclusions. The *Overarching Issues* working group is analyzing the new security environment and new mission areas that flow out of that security setting.[16] In addition, the group will review national security reform efforts in other countries and regions and identify approaches that may be of value to the United States.[17] This group, together with the Executive Secretariat, will fuse outputs from the other working groups and communicate findings to the public.[18]

Case Studies – This Working Group will provide the core body of analytical research for the Project by examining significant cases in the country's past. Using a systematic research methodology, the *Case Studies* working group will conduct 20 case studies of past landmark successes and failures in the history of United States national security in an

attempt to uncover the root problems that plague our national security system today. These case studies will inform the analytic work of PNSR's other working groups by highlighting recurring trends in the way the U.S. national security system responds to complex national security problems.[19] These case studies, underway since early 2007, have been selected to illustrate the enduring nature of interagency challenges and to explore how the United States responds to crises that have significant non-military dimensions.[20] The Project is currently holding public roundtables at venues in the Washington, D.C. area twice a month to present the case studies and receive input from attendees. The final versions of the case studies will be published in a volume compiled by the Heritage Foundation. Completed case studies include "CORDS in Vietnam," "Alaskan Earthquake Recovery Effort," "Iran/Contra Operations," "Just Cause in Panama," and "Energy Crisis (1973 and 1979)."[21]

Vision and Guiding Principles – Organizational theorists suggest that agreement on a vision, purpose, and principles is the most significant factor in improving organizational effectiveness.[22] This working group is examining whether there is such agreement throughout the national security system, specifically paying attention to whether military doctrine applies or is cohesive with all agencies and departments.[23] The group will also examine how vision and guiding principles are formed and disseminated. In the event that it becomes necessary, the group will formulate and recommend a single statement of vision, purpose, and guiding principles.[24]

Strategy, Policy, and Planning Processes – One of the PNSR Guiding Coalition members, General Brent Scowcroft, a former National Security Advisor, identified strategic planning as one of the National Security Council's key deficiencies.[25] Strategic planning involves defining major objectives and subsequently developing strategies to achieve those objectives.[26] In order to address the issue, this working group is examining the processes that the government uses to formulate strategy, policy, and plans throughout the national security system.[27] In the planning process, it will examine both deliberate planning and crisis-action planning.[28] The group is especially concerned with examining whether the current system focuses on outputs and how well it uses performance measurement systems.

Structure – This working group will attempt to define what organizational structure means and how it relates to national security. The group is analyzing several levels of structures including national structures, regional structures, and country structures.[29] It is looking for instances of effective interaction within multilateral structures that could be useful to national security reform. The group's findings will assess the degree to which structure influences organizational performance and how much optimal structure depends upon organizational strategy for producing a desired output.[30]

Human Capital – The "People" working group is concerned with describing the organizational culture of the National Security Council, the Department of Homeland Security, and the various agencies that make up the national security system and determining whether conflicting cultures and styles affect interagency cooperation or

performance.[31]   The group is currently looking at several areas related to human capital including training, education, personnel policies and performance incentives. The group is particularly interested in leadership and its effect on organizational culture.[32]

Knowledge Management – The collection, organization, and analysis of information is a critical component of the national security system.[33]   To this end, proper knowledge management becomes essential in order to respond to national security threats in a timely manner.   The dynamic and unpredictable nature of current threats demands rapid communication capabilities, easy access to essential information, and the quick dissemination of lessons learned.[34] This working group is examining cultural, structural, and technological obstacles that are currently impeding the national security system's ability to manage knowledge.   The group is concentrating on the state of technology, information technology, and information systems in its assessment of interagency collaboration capabilities by drawing on case studies to illustrate information problems and system deficiencies.[35]

Resources – This working group functions by analyzing the resource allocation process for funding the tools that protect national power.[36] The group pays particular attention to the role of the Office of National Security Programs in the Office of Management and Budget.[37] It is examining how fiscal guidance is prepared, how funds become allocated throughout different missions and departments, how funds are requested, and other issues involving oversight.[38]   It will also address foreign emergency relief, military, and developmental assistance allocations.[39]

Congressional Oversight – This working group examines the role of Congress in supporting, overseeing, and funding the national security system.[40] Preliminary studies suggest that Congress reinforces interagency divisions by focusing exclusively on department and agency authorities and budgets.[41] It has been suggested that as a byproduct of this approach, Congress is inhibiting interagency collaboration on national security issues. Coupled with this is the fact that Congress is essentially removed from the national security system because the system is placed within the Executive Office of the President.[42] The group is examining the continued appropriateness of this function and will produce viable alternatives if necessary.[43]

Congressional Mechanisms for Reform – The final three Working Groups will be heavily involved in the final stages of the Project. This Working Group will work in a "liaison" capacity with Congressional leadership and their staffs to examine ways in which processes within Congress are hindering national security affairs and discuss Congressional reform. The group will be specifically concerned with oversight, authorization and appropriation, committee jurisdiction, and House and Senate rules.[44]

Legal Affairs – This group headed by Gordon Ledermen of the Council on Foreign Relations is tasked with identifying any legal issues that might hamper the government's ability to implement national security reform measures. The group will also help formulate solutions to those legal issues and work to implement them. At the end of the Project, this group's main task will be to actually draft the new National Security Act and

any other Executive Orders or Congressional resolutions and then submit them to their respective authorities.[45]

Implementation – This group primarily will function in a lobbying capacity, although PNSR is not officially a policy advocate. Its mission will be to support Congress through the implementation stage, help committee staffs with research and drafting, and be available to Members of Congress for support or to resolve any situations that might come about.[46]

Preliminary Findings

The Project has completed 14 of 20 scheduled case studies to date and extensive presentations and round-table discussions have been held with public audiences for five of these studies. Preliminary research stemming from these case study drafts suggest that while the founding democratic principles of the United States are very effective in promoting democratic ideals, the government institutions that have developed from this framework are in need of repair. This is particularly evident in the ability of the federal government to find, recruit, and place qualified people in jobs that serve the country's national security needs. For those that conducted the case studies, these findings invite the necessity for further research, analysis, and solution formulation. The Project therefore seems to be a warranted effort that continues to gain momentum and support from an array of sectors.

Conclusion

As people's awareness of national security issues grow, and the very definition of national security expands, the call for reform to improve government capabilities and enhance its tools has become stronger and increasingly carries more weight. People with different political beliefs and personal interests have begun to unite in order to strengthen all instruments of U.S. national power, thereby generating new and better options for dealing with security. While specific recommendations are still months away from being formulated, the need for improved interagency effectiveness is becoming clearer and the potential consequences of inaction are becoming more definite.

Experts point to the successful implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act as being one of the primary reasons for the efficiency of Operation Desert Storm; some even lament the Act's timing, speculating that an earlier adoption of such legislation would have dramatically affected the outcomes of such military incursions as Operation Eagle Claw – the attempt to free American hostages in Tehran in 1980.[47] A movement has now begun to prevent similar tardiness from being repeated in the reorganization of the national security system.

[1] Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). 2005. *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: US Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era*, 6. Universal resource link located at: http://www.ndu.edu/library/docs/BeyondGoldwaterNicholsPhase2Report.pdf; accessed on 6 June 2007.

[2] Locher, James R. III. 2002. *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act unifies the pentagon*, 15. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

[3] Ibid., 450.

[4] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007a. Overview, par. 5. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., par. 4.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007b. Study methodology, par. 1. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/methodology/; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[9] Ibid., par. 3-4.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., par. 5.

[12] Ibid., par. 10-11.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., par. 12-13.

[15] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007c. Working groups. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[16] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007d. Overarching issues, par. 1-5. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/overarching_issues.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007a. Overview, par. 6. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[20] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007e. Case studies, par. 1. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/products/casestudies/; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007f. Vision and guiding principles, par. 2. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/vision_principles.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., par. 2-3.

[25] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007g. Strategy, policy, and planning processes, par. 2. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/strategy_policy_planning.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., par. 3.

[28] Ibid., par. 1.

[29] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007h. Structure, par. 2-4. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/structure.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007i. Human capital, par. 1-4. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/human_capital.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[32] Ibid., par. 5.

[33] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007j. Knowledge management, par. 1. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/knowledge_management.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., par. 2-4.

[36] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007k. Resources, par. 1. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/resources.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[37] Ibid., par. 3.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., par. 1.

[40] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007l. Congressional oversight, par. 1. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/congressional_oversight.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[41] Ibid., par. 2.

[42] Ibid., par. 2-3.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007m. Congressional mechanisms for reform, par. 1-3. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/congressional_liason.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[45] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007n. Legal affairs, par. 1-5. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/legal_affairs.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[46] Project on National Security Reform (PNSR). 2007o. Implementation, par. 1-2. Universal resource link located at: http://www.pnsr.org/overview/workinggroups/implementation.html; accessed on 20 June 2007.

[47] Davis, Vincent. 1991. Defense reorganization and national security. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 517 (September) : 173.

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