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**JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE  
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**

**The National Security Strategy of the United States:  
Grand Strategy or Propaganda?**

by

**Patrick A. McClelland  
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF**

**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**15 June 2007**

**Thesis Adviser: Dr. Vardell Nesmith**

*For Lisa, Caitlin, Chelsea and AnnMarie*

## **About the Author**

Lieutenant Colonel Patrick A. McClelland received his commission from the University of Michigan in 1986 where he earned a B.S.E. in Electrical Engineering. He attended Undergraduate Navigator Training at Mather AFB in Sacramento, California and Undergraduate Pilot Training at Columbus AFB, Mississippi. He has attended Squadron Officers School in residence and attended the United Kingdoms Joint Forces Command and Staff College at RAF Bracknell, earning a M.S. in International Defense Studies from Kings College, London, England. From January 1998 to April 1998 he served as Operations Officer, 79th Fighter Squadron, 20th Fighter Wing Deployed in support of OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH. Lieutenant Colonel McClelland served as the Commander, 27th Operations Support Squadron, 27th Operations Group, 27th Fighter Wing, Cannon AFB, Clovis New Mexico. His promotion to the rank of Colonel will be effective 1 July 2007. Following graduation from the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Colonel McClelland will be assigned to the Pentagon, working in the Policy division of the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

## **Abstract**

Within academic and military strategy circles, it is widely accepted that the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) is America's grand strategy. However, the extent to which there is widespread misuse, misunderstanding and disagreement on the meaning of grand strategy is inconceivable at times. The ambivalent attitude about a common, coherent understanding of the concept of grand strategy, which pervades the writings of both experts and students of strategic thought, is a cavalier approach to a crucial aspect of America's successful future. In the first chapter the paper establishes a foundation of terminology to provide continuity throughout the work. The terms national interest, elements of national power, grand strategy and national security are discussed and definitions provided. Subsequently, the study reviews the history of relevant Congressional actions to explore historical perspectives and determine whether grand strategy was in the mind of Congressional leaders when they levied the requirement for a National Security Strategy. Finally, using the previous chapters as a foundation, the paper critically analyzes the issues of Congressional intent, pluralism, and the National Security Strategy as propaganda. Through the analysis this study suggests that, by definition and intent, the United States National Security Strategy is not grand strategy and treating it as such has negative implications for the US in the post-Cold War new world order.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

TITLE .....i

ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....iii

ABSTRACT.....iv

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....v

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....1

CHAPTER TWO: TERMS AND CONCEPTS.....4

    National Interests

    Elements of National Power

    Grand Strategy

    Paradigms and US National Security

CHAPTER THREE: HISTORY AND PARADIGMS.....26

    The United States National Security Act of 1947

    The Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (Gold Water-Nichols Act)

CHAPTER FOUR: GRAND STRATEGY OR PROPAGANDA.....39

    Congressional Intent

    Pluralism and Consensus

    Is the NSS just Propaganda?

    Security Strategy or Grand Strategy

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION .....55

APPENDIX A.....60

BIBLIOGRAPHY .....66

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

*“Think like a wise man but communicate  
in the language of the people.”*

William Butler Yeats<sup>1</sup>

Within the fields of academia and military doctrine, experts and authors discuss the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) as America’s grand strategy. This paper establishes through research and analysis that in fact the US National Security Strategy is *not* grand strategy and treating it as such has negative implications for the US in the post-Cold War new world order.

In his 1991 work *Grand Strategy in War and Peace* Paul Kennedy offered grand strategy as “...the capacity of the nation’s leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and nonmilitary, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation’s long term (that is, in wartime and peacetime) best interests.”<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, there is neither a common definition nor an accepted standard definition of grand strategy in political or military academia. Additionally, the confused use of the term grand strategy that drives this lack of a common or standard definition cannot be dismissed as semantics. In fact, the extent to which there is widespread misuse, misunderstanding and disagreement on the meaning of grand strategy is inconceivable at times. Don Snider in his monograph states, “Several conclusions about the formulation of American national security strategy can be drawn from the experiences of these six (NSS) reports...The first...there is no real

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<sup>1</sup> William Butler Yeats. Available from <http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes>; accessed 27 October 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

consensus today as to the appropriate grand strategy for the United States...”<sup>3</sup> Within the military, Department of Defense Joint Publication (JP) 1-02 (2006) does not provide a definition of grand strategy; instead it directs the reader to see national security strategy. Investigating further, JP 1-02 defines national security strategy as, “A document approved by the President of the United States for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security.”<sup>4</sup> In an example of the lack of consistency and clarity of concepts the 2001 version of JP 1-02 added the following under national security strategy, “Also called **national strategy or grand strategy.**”<sup>5</sup> Still, some authors portray grand strategy as the purview of military adventures. For example, R. Craig Nation writes of, “...the head of a powerful clan in the Drenica region whose defiance of authority was as much a part of the kaçak tradition as it was of KLA grand strategy...”<sup>6</sup>

The ambivalent attitude about a common, coherent understanding of the concept of grand strategy, which pervades the writings of both experts and students of strategic thought, is a cavalier approach to a crucial aspect of America’s successful future. To prove the assertion that the US National Security Strategy is not American grand strategy, the paper will first tackle terminology with the aim of providing a framework for understanding, based on clear and comprehensive definitions. Second, a relevant history

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing Don Snider was the Director, Political-Military Studies, at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Don M. Snider, *The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), 14-15. Murdock demonstrates the same mixing of terms in Clark A Murdock, *Improving the Practice of National Security Strategy: A New Approach for the Post-Cold War World* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 5.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 1-02; *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (www.dtic.mil, as amended through 14 April 2006).

<sup>5</sup> JP 1-02, (2006).

<sup>6</sup> R. Craig Nation is a Professor of Strategy and Director of Russian and Eurasian Studies at the U.S. Army War College, KLA is the Kosovo Liberation Army, R. Craig Nation, *War in the Balkans: 1991-2002* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 2003), 227.

of the origin of pertinent legislation and institutions will be provided as a foundation from which to build the case. Finally, the thesis will utilize the common terminology and developed foundations to evaluate four aspects of the NSS. First, the study will explore whether the NSS is grand strategy by Congressional intent. Second, the paper will examine the process that produces the NSS and examine whether a consensus approach is capable of a grand strategic vision. Third, the study will evaluate the question of the NSS as a presidential propaganda tool. Finally the paper will complete the analysis by direct evaluation of the NSS as grand strategy. It is from this analysis that a conclusion is drawn to answer the question of whether the NSS is American grand strategy.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TERMS AND CONCEPTS

*“Not until terms and concepts have been clearly defined  
can one hope to make any progress in examining the question  
clearly and simply and expect the reader to share one’s views”*

Carl Von Clausewitz<sup>7</sup>

When studying the matters of strategic thought and grand strategy it is easy to highlight inconsistencies and contradictions in the use and conceptual understanding of the associated language. Within and between texts it is difficult to identify the common use of terminology leaving readers with a conflicting spectrum of understanding on the subject. Additionally, academic journals are full of articles whose authors apply terminology outside original context, or who introduce new terms that apply to other fields of study (e.g. business, engineering, technology etc).<sup>8</sup> Milan Vego explains this manifestation exceptionally well when he states,

The use of precisely defined terms is critical in any profession....It is not a question of semantics, as some would say, because the terms should be used and understood properly. This does not mean that terms or their meanings should be defined dogmatically; there is always a need to create new terms or modify existing ones. However, great care should be shown in changing meanings... Most terms used over many decades and even centuries are still valid. Some need to be modified because of changing practices but that does not mean drastically altering the meanings of existing and well-defined terms.<sup>9</sup>

Keeping these facts in mind, it is important at this stage to develop an understanding of the terms that are central to this paper. What follows is meant to

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<sup>7</sup> Although this quote is credited to Clausewitz, credit for the inspiration to use it in this section of the thesis must go to Dr. Vego. Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 132 and Milan N. Vego, “The Problem of Common Terminology” *Joint Force Quarterly*, 43 (2006). 49.

<sup>8</sup> Vego, 44-49.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 44.

provide a foundation for the subsequent assessment of relevant theory and practice. Clear, definitive use of the English language must be practiced when putting forward theories and principles if those theories and principles are expected to be understood and useful. Too often in academic circles, especially when the subject matter concerns principles of statecraft and warfare, authors show little concern for convention or consistency when it comes to the use of terms and definitions. More often than not literal meanings are ignored, new definitions are created or, worse, existing terms are applied outside historical precedent. None of this is useful for the practitioner of strategy. However, it is important to acknowledge the fact that through changes in language, culture, and society, definitions can and do evolve over the course of time.

Additionally, context is important when considering the choice of words as many have separate meanings in different contexts as well as applicability at different levels within a particular context.<sup>10</sup> The important distinction here is that in the development of theory, careless use of the English language leads to puzzling concepts, confusing terminology and conflicting perceptions. Brevity, clarity and consistency are critical aspects of practical, constructive and effective theory and doctrine. The following sections will discuss the terms national interest, elements of national power, grand strategy and national security in order to provide a common reference and establish the foundation for arguing the case of US national security strategy versus grand strategy.

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<sup>10</sup> For example; Link, in science or mechanics is a connection, such as *link in the chain*; Proponents of Effects Based Operations have defined links in their theory as relationships. Additionally, in the military context the word objective has different applicability at the strategic, operational and tactical levels.

## National Interests

As will be seen through the course of this work, the term ‘national interest’ is widely used when discussing US national security or grand strategy. Unfortunately, very few strategic pundits bother to explain or define national interests. A clear understanding of national interests is specifically relevant to this study because it is the language contained in Congressional documents that gave rise to the National Security Strategy and it will ultimately play a fundamental role in a clear understanding of grand strategy.

Samuel Huntington claims a vital national interest, “...is one in which they (Americans) [sic] are willing to expend blood...and treasure to defend. National interests usually combine security and material concerns, on one hand and moral and ethical concerns, on the other”<sup>11</sup> Although Huntington’s explanation is clear, it is unnecessary to classify national interests into categories such as vital or important. President Clinton’s first National Security Strategy used this framework in an attempt to mirror the language of the 1986 legislation requiring the NSS. However, categorizing interests (vital, important etc) complicates the terrain and unnecessarily introduces ambiguity and such ambiguity can result in flawed grand strategy.<sup>12</sup>

David Jablonsky represents national interests in terms of core national interests when he writes, “Core national interests...the ‘eternal’ and ultimate justification for national policy, can be divided into three categories: physical security, economic

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<sup>11</sup> Samuel P Huntington, “The Erosion of American National Interests,” *Foreign Affairs*, Sept/Oct 1997, 35.

<sup>12</sup> The only President to attempt this approach was President Clinton. Clinton’s 1997 National Security Strategy classified national interest into three categories; vital, important, and other. Critics of this NSS suggested with a broad enough view this construct permitted the administration to determine that any issue, crisis or world situation was in the country’s national interest and hence the strategy was flawed from the start. The classifications were intended to provide clarification to a complex subject, but in the end did not and were therefore unnecessary. See Leo A. Mercado, *The National Security Strategy and National Interests: Quantity or Quality?* Thesis (Carlisle Barracks: United States Army War College, 2002), 2

prosperity, and promotion of values.”<sup>13</sup> Jablonsky’s core national interest model is useful, clear and has Constitutional underpinnings (security, prosperity and promotion of values) and for these reasons it will be utilized for the remainder of this study. This model was supported by the Hart-Rudman Commission in 2000 which stated, “Strategy and policy must be grounded in the national interest....National interests are the most durable basis for assuring policy consistency. Gaining and sustaining public support for U.S. policy is best achieved when coupled with clearly visible national interests.”<sup>14</sup> Additionally, core national interests and the preservation of them are mutually independent. That is to say, preserving one does not guarantee the preservation of all others. For example, the preservation of prosperity would not ensure security. More importantly, attainment of security, or specifically *national security*, will not in and of itself guarantee the other national interests.

To go one step further, preserving the national interests of the United States is the Constitutional duty of our government; imposing *our* ‘values’ on other nations (vis-à-vis democracy into Iraq) is not. In the age of globalization it is too easy to cross that line and rationalize our behavior as in the best interest of the country, or more commonly, in the best interest of national security. For instance, the present administration’s practice of labeling countries as the ‘axis of evil’ and refusing to engage in diplomatic relations was more a judgment of the axis countries value system and less a strategy to preserve US national interests.<sup>15</sup> Before discussing the difference between this notion and grand

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<sup>13</sup> David Jablonsky, *Time’s cycle and National Military Strategy: The Case for Continuity in a Time of Change* (Carlisle Barracks, Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), 7.

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century (Hart-Rudman Commission), *Seeking a National Strategy: a concert for preserving security and promoting freedom: The Phase II Report on a U.S. National Security Strategy for the 21st century*. Washington D.C.: GPO, 2000. 6.

<sup>15</sup> As of this writing, this practice was finally abandoned as the US began entering diplomatic relations with Korea and Iran; two States that President Bush declared ‘axis of evil’ countries.

strategy it will be necessary to explain elements of national power, the means by which nations influence state and non-state actors.

### **Elements of National Power**

The aim of this section is to present a short discussion on elements of national power in order to provide common ground for the remainder of the paper. As Amos Jordan notes, power...“is the central dimension of international and national security.”<sup>16</sup> The challenge when discussing national power, in the context of grand strategy, is the lack of universally accepted definitions. Power, plain and simple, is the ability to influence (individuals, groups, nations et al.). ‘Elements of national power’ is a phrase frequently used in the literature of security or grand strategy. Unfortunately, inconsistent use of qualifiers (specifically between authors and even different articles from the same author) is entirely too common, giving rise to a lack of clarity for the astute reader.

To exacerbate matters, many authors have accepted the military doctrinal practice of classifying the elements into acronym friendly categories. The most common representation is DIME (Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic). For the purpose of military doctrine this acronym can be useful (it provides an easy means for strategy professionals to perform their art), however, outside of the doctrinal venue, it is not particularly useful. The reason is that it tends to compel elements to be forced into categories where they do not fit (e.g. national will, religion etc.). Other than DIME, the two most common appearances are ‘the elements’ and ‘all elements’ of national power. The difference appears subtle, but on further examination, especially when the subject

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing Dr. Amos Jordan was the president of the Pacific Forum at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Amos A. Jordan et al, *American National Security Policy and Process* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 10.

matter is already complex, the nuances between each have notable impact, especially in the security or strategy environment. ‘The elements’ suggests there is a specific list of elements which is all inclusive while ‘all elements’ implies that some entire list must be used in any given situation. Clarity can be easily achieved by eliminating any qualifier to the phrase. For the remainder of this paper, when not part of another author’s original work, the term ‘elements of national power’ will be used to denote *any and all applicable* resources a nation can use to leverage power and influence state and non-state actors.

Now that the groundwork has been laid for national interests and elements of national power it is time to turn attention to the concept of grand strategy.

### **Grand Strategy**

The goal of this section is to put forward a definition and understanding of grand strategy that will dismiss the issue of semantics and provide a measure by which to gauge the NSS. Before progressing directly, however, it will be useful to examine both words (grand and strategy) separately.

As Paul Kennedy notes, within the context of warfare literature, a distinction was made in early writings between two levels of analysis; that is tactics and strategy.<sup>17</sup> This distinction was both relevant and appropriate as it helped depict the delineation between observed levels of theory and practice. As Clausewitz described within the context of war specifically, “strategy is the concept of using battles to win a war.”<sup>18</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 1-02 unfortunately abandons Clausewitz-like clarity through wordiness, “A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a

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<sup>17</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, (editor), *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Clausewitz, 128, 177-183.

synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and/or multinational objectives.”<sup>19</sup> In the more general context, the new Oxford American dictionary (2005) defines strategy as a plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim. Strategy can apply to business, games of chance, sports or many other matters where competition exists between entities; it is not specifically restricted to the context of warfare.

Grand is one of many words in the English language that has various meanings depending on the context. As an adjective, the new Oxford American dictionary (2005) provides four definitions each within a different context. It is the second of these that is most appropriate for our discussion: “denoting the largest or most important item of its kind.”<sup>20</sup> Combining the words grand and strategy - grand strategy would be the largest or most important strategy. All that remains is to define the context (warfare, business, sports etc.) to gain a useful conceptual understanding and definition of grand strategy. Before accomplishing this, however, it will be instructive to explore historical examples and recent attempts to define grand strategy.

In his recent thesis Colonel Joseph Bassani’s attempt to develop a greater understanding of American grand strategy epitomizes both the struggle to nail down the concept and the typical misguided solution of trying to put forward yet another, more complex, definition in the hopes of providing clarity. For his part, Bassani concludes, grand strategy is “an overarching concept that guides how nations employ all of the instruments of national power to shape world events and achieve specific national

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<sup>19</sup> This idea of burdening the clarity of communication was introduced to the author by the thesis advisor Dr. Vardell Nesmith, JP 1-02 (2006).

<sup>20</sup> The first definition is; magnificent and imposing in appearance, the third; good or enjoyable and the fourth is denoting one generation removed (grandson, grandmother).

security objectives. Grand strategy provides the linkage between national goals and actions by establishing a deliberately ambiguous vision of the world as we would like it to be (ends) and the methods (ways) and resources (means) we will employ in pursuit of that vision.”<sup>21</sup> While there are several shortcomings of his offering, the most important, for the purpose of this paper, is that he qualifies grand strategy within the statecraft context, as being restricted to national security aims. This unnecessary and inaccurate constraint is similar to asserting strategy and grand strategy can only apply to matters of war and the military. Bassani’s contextual constraint above is a common error for academic and military authors who attempt to address or use the term grand strategy.

It is impossible to determine whether these are errors of omission or commission, but the conclusion is that academic and military authors often, and inappropriately, restrict their perception of grand strategy to military matters or actions in war. The seven examples that follow demonstrate this trend and also provide a body of evidence to show this study’s assertion that material on grand strategy is convoluted and confusing and full of abstractions.<sup>22</sup>

In his work *An Introduction to Strategy*, Andre Beaufre introduced the notion of a higher strategy (though he does not specifically use the term grand strategy) which is the art of applying force so that it makes the most effective contribution towards achieving the ends set by political policy. Beaufre’s expansion acknowledges that military is only one means to achieve objectives laid down by policy, but it is in consideration of these objectives that he fails to appreciate or consider aims other than war. In other words his

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<sup>21</sup> J.A. Bassani Jr., *Saving the World for Democracy*, Thesis (Norfolk: Joint Forces Staff College, 2005), 12, 14.

<sup>22</sup> The concept of abstractions in literature was introduced to the author by the thesis advisor Dr. Vardell Nesmith.

definition is necessarily and intentionally restricted to conflict (not necessarily war), or in his terms, “the art of the dialectic of two opposing wills using force to resolve their dispute.”<sup>23</sup>

Colin Gray, in his work *Modern Strategy*, points out that strategy can be characterized via geography, weapons, technology, or character of war (limited, irregular etc.). Gray contends, “It does not matter precisely which form of words are preferred for a working definition, but the essence of strategy must be identified unambiguously.”<sup>24</sup> Although his position is understood, the suggested framework is only logical for an academic discourse. In matters of statecraft, words matter and a precise understanding and definition of grand strategy is required. Robert J. Art in his book *A Grand Strategy for America* states, “...a grand strategy tells a nation’s leaders what goals they should aim for and how best they can use their country’s military power to attain these goals.”<sup>25</sup> Neither of these academics strays from military strategy and both fall short of providing the true essence of grand strategy.

Clark Murdock, drawing on the thoughts of Richard Betts, prefers a more simple definition of strategy that applies to national security; “Strategy is a plan for using the means of national power (economic, military, diplomatic, law enforcement, cultural, etc.) to achieve political ends.”<sup>26</sup> He continues, “Grand strategy is concerned with doing the

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Grand’ has a well out of context meaning in the French language, see Andre Beaufre, , *An Introduction to Strategy*, Translated by General R.H. Barry (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc, 1965), 21-23.

<sup>24</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>25</sup> Robert J. Art, *A Grand Strategy for America* (Ithaca: Century Foundation, 2003), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Clark A Murdock, *Improving the Practice of National Security Strategy: A New Approach for the Post-Cold War World* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 12.

right job; strategy is doing the job right.”<sup>27</sup> Murdock’s offering, though clear, oversimplifies the concept, which is just as problematic for strategic practitioners.

In his book *The Fourth Power*, Gary Hart states “Grand Strategy has to do with the application of power and resources to achieve large national purposes...”<sup>28</sup> Within his proposition Hart is unconvincing and, given the nature of the delivery, he seems uncertain of the importance or even accuracy of his own explanation.

In one of his later works, B.H. Liddell Hart notes, “...the role of grand strategy - higher strategy - is to coordinate and direct all the resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political object of the war...”<sup>29</sup> This, as will be shown, is an uncharacteristic diversion for Hart, and a clear example of how easy it is for even the most learned scholars to slide, intentionally or unintentionally, into the habit of constraining a definition within a particular context.

Examining this point from a Department of Defense historical perspective, the 2001 JP 1-02 made no attempt to provide a definition of grand strategy. Instead it directs the reader to “See **national security strategy; national strategy**” (not ‘see also’ for related subjects), suggesting the terms are equal or at the very least synonymous.<sup>30</sup>

Examining further, the same document defined national security strategy as “The art and science of developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power (diplomatic, economic, military, and informational) *to achieve objectives that contribute to national security.*”<sup>31</sup> Turning the page to national strategy the 2001 JP 1-02 provided,

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Gary Hart, *The Fourth Power*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>29</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy, The Indirect Approach* (Whitstable, GB: Latimer Trend & Co, 1967). 335-336. (author’s emphasis).

<sup>30</sup> JP 1-02 (2001), 178, (emphasis original).

<sup>31</sup> JP 1-02 (2001), 287, (emphasis added).

“the art and science of developing and using the diplomatic, economic, and informational powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war *to secure national objectives*”<sup>32</sup> The delineation in definitions between ‘objectives that contribute to national security’ and ‘to secure national objectives’ is clearly intentional, yet adds confusion when, as mentioned above, both national security strategy and national strategy are cited as synonyms for grand strategy. Significantly, the 2006 JP 1-02 eliminates the entry for national strategy and its entry for grand strategy only states “See **national security strategy**.”<sup>33</sup> This intentional exclusion of national strategy ignores the fact that security is only one element of grand strategy.

Essentially with the change in DoD definitions from 2001 to 2006 (i.e., since JP1-02 no longer equates national strategy and grand strategy) it is clear that within the Department of Defense the national security strategy *is* the grand strategy of the United States.

Not only is this logically false, but more importantly it blurs a critical distinction that once existed in US foreign policy; as shown in the previous section on national interests, security is only *one* of the core national interests. More importantly it is perhaps the largest and most frightening indicator that the US is traveling down a road that will ultimately result in our national *inability* to implement the other elements of national power. Our chosen path by many indicators is a militaristic state that recognizes, wields, and understands military might as the only relevant element of national power.

These examples have shown how many authors yield to abstractions and fail to provide a common definition and understanding of grand strategy. Failures come in

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<sup>32</sup> JP 1-02 (2001), 288, (emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> JP 1-02 (2006), 227, (emphasis original).

extended sentences with contorted phrases in hope of capturing the complex concept of grand strategy. Others come in the form of authors trapped within the paradigm of their environment, even to the extent that conceptually many of these definitions are not practical or useful. Perhaps not surprisingly, the most thoughtful and useful discussion of grand strategy began over fifty years ago, during the greatest struggle of the twentieth century.

In 1944, Edward Mead Earle wrote, "...strategy is the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation – or a coalition of nations – including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential or merely presumed. The highest type of strategy – sometimes called grand strategy – is that which so integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with the maximum chance of victory"<sup>34</sup> Earle's contribution expanded the concept of grand strategy to not only include implementing policy during times of war, but in times of peace as well.<sup>35</sup>

Over a decade later, in his classic work *Strategy*, B.H. Liddell Hart provided perhaps the last and most critical element of the complete and pure essence of grand strategy. Hart wrote,

Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and man-power of nations in order to sustain the fighting services. Also the moral resources – for to foster the people's willing spirit is often as important as to possess the more concrete forms of power. Grand strategy, too, should regulate the distribution of power between the several services, and between the services and industry. Moreover,

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<sup>34</sup> His work is pre-National Security Act, which is key based on 1947 NSA verbiage. Edward M Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: 1943), viii

<sup>35</sup> Specifically Sun Tzu's concept on preparation during peace, avoiding war if possible and if necessary attacking when the enemy is weak. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Westview Press, 1994), 134-140

fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy – which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure and not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponent's will. A good cause is a sword as well as armour. Likewise chivalry in war can be a most effective weapon in weakening the opponents' will to resist, as well as augmenting moral strength.

Furthermore, while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but so regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peace – for its security and prosperity. The sorry state of peace, for both sides, that has followed most wars can be traced to the fact that unlike strategy, the realm of grand strategy is for the most part *terra incognita* – still awaiting exploration, and understanding.<sup>36</sup>

All that remains to a fundamental understanding of the concept of grand strategy is to ensure Earle and Hart's works are current and relevant for the early twenty-first century. Thankfully, Paul Kennedy, in his book *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (1991), has accomplished this task. Kennedy reflects on how broad a useful definition of grand strategy has become and makes three points. First, he notes “a true grand strategy is now concerned with peace as much (perhaps even more than) with war. It was about the evolution and integration of policies...the real point of Clausewitz's observation that war was a continuation of policy by other means.”<sup>37</sup> Second, Kennedy finds, “grand strategy was about the balancing of ends and means, both in peacetime and wartime.”<sup>38</sup>

Third, and perhaps most important Kennedy adds,

...because the broader definition comprehends much more than what is happening on the battlefield itself...the student of grand strategy needs to take into consideration a whole number of factors...including; 1). The critical importance of husbanding and managing national resources, in order to achieve that balance between ends and means...2). The vital role

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<sup>36</sup> Liddell Hart, 322.

<sup>37</sup> Kennedy, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

of diplomacy in both peacetime and wartime...3). The issue of national morale and political culture...<sup>39</sup>

Kennedy makes the complex nature of grand strategy very clear and acknowledges that its essence “operates at various levels, political, strategic...all interacting with each other...”<sup>40</sup>

Grand strategy is fundamentally unique to individual nations. It is necessarily a product of principles which guides nations over the course of their existence. These principles are nationally unique and develop from cultural precedents, historical experience as well as changing economics, international influence, and demographics. The product of grand strategy should be the articulation of the values of a nation and its people.

Several points about a conceptual understanding of grand strategy fall from this observation. First, it is logical to expect a discussion of national values (aligned in some fashion with a nations experience). Second, it is reasonable to expect a logical discussion of national interests and how they relate to the stated values. Third, the intent of a nation must be framed, especially in the era of globalization, in the context of the greater community of nations. In broad terms, how does the nation view its role in the world and how does it want to be viewed by the world.

Grand strategy must then take into account all aspects of statecraft...all elements of national power, all elements of state weakness (what is there may not be as important as what is missing) and it must endure through peace and war. Within war, it must

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 5.

endure through conflicts great and small, without great and frequent fluctuations or iterations.

Having laid the foundation of terminology, explored misguided adventures of academic and military authors, investigated the conceptual origins of grand strategy, and dismissed the issue of semantics by providing a foundation for the development of true understanding, all that remains is a clear and concise definition to use in the remainder of this paper. Fusing some of Paul Kennedy's concepts with the terms previously discussed in this section provides us with a concise and applicable definition: *grand strategy is the articulation of a national vision that uses all the elements of national power, military and non military, to ensure the long-term preservation and enhancement of a countries core national interests.*

Building on the developed understanding of national interest, elements of national power and grand strategy, the following section will associate these terms with the concept of national security. Additionally, the section will begin to describe the development of the US national security paradigm and circumstances driving its appeal to, and excessive application over time by, US leadership.

### **Paradigms and US National Security**

Providing a meaningful definition of national security in the twenty-first century can be likened to chasing a greased pig on a polished chrome floor; every once in awhile you might get your hands around it, but the inevitable out-balance-situation that follows means that the chase will almost immediately resume. In his work *American National Security*, Jordan accurately describes the quagmire that has become the U.S. national

security dilemma; the term itself...“is a marvelously elastic term that has been stretched at times to cover a multitude of different issues and activities.”<sup>41</sup> The term national security has been used to rationalize a wide range of acts, from wire taps to interventions in Somalia and Panama and almost anything between. In fact as Jordan states, “the term has come into such broad usage since World War II that, like a boomerang, we cannot throw it away.”<sup>42</sup>

National security has become a widely used, adaptable and often vague term of policy-makers and diplomats. Defining it as a concept is therefore an essential step in understanding its relevance within the United States strategic process. Because many academic and government authors have a tendency to indiscriminately interchange the terms national security and national defense, it is important to first make a distinction between these terms before making any comparison with the previously discussed grand strategy.

The new Oxford American dictionary (2005) states defense is “the action of defending from attack or resisting attack.” Historically, national defense for the United States can be characterized as protection of the union’s people and its territories from attack. Although security may also represent the physical protection of the nation’s people, it also implies safeguarding them through a variety of other means. This is an important distinction historically because defense, especially in the US, usually manifests as physical protection from external threats (military force). Security on the

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<sup>41</sup> Jordan, 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

other hand suggests the anticipation of threats, looking forward to challenges, and eliminating them *before* defense is required.<sup>43</sup>

The development of America's national security concept accurately reflects America's increasing responsibilities in world affairs. Prior to WWII, America's notion of security was closely aligned with its isolationist tendencies, consisted of physical protection of the nation's border, and was discussed strictly in terms of national defense. On May 15, 1945, Congressman David I. Walsh (Chairman, Committee on Naval Affairs) penned a letter to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal recommending a study, based on the lessons of WWII, to determine whether consolidation of the Army and Navy departments would increase military organizational effectiveness in the postwar era. Walsh believed this single 'Department of National Defense' would gain fiscal efficiencies but recognized some limitations. He noted, "It would *not* coordinate the efforts and plans of our military establishment with other departments of the Government concerned, in one way or another, with national policy..."<sup>44</sup> It was an acknowledgement that the Department of National Defense would solely focus on coordinating matters between military departments. Almost five weeks later, Secretary Forrestal sent a letter to Mr. Ferdinand Eberstadt asking assistance to conduct such a study. Secretary Forrestal's request signifies the tipping point in literature and thought when the term defense gave way to the concept of security. In his letter, Forrestal asked Eberstadt to investigate three questions and used the phrases, 'to improve our national security' and to

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<sup>43</sup> Ronald Steel, "The New Meaning of Security," *U.S. National Security: Beyond the Cold War*, David Jablonsky et al. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997), 51-54, and Jordan, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Emphasis added. This letter is contained in, Ferdinand Eberstadt, *Report to Honorable James Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy, on Unification of the War and Navy departments and postwar organization for national security* (Washington D.C. 1945). This document was a Senate committee report of the 79th Congress 1st session and is commonly referred to as the Eberstadt Report, III.

‘protect our national security’. It is impossible to know what discussions or debates occurred in the weeks between Walsh’s letter and Forrestal’s request for a study, but the subtle and distinct change in language would forever change the lens of US perspective on protecting the nation.<sup>45</sup>

Ferdinand Eberstadt believed that the nation’s new international commitments greatly enlarged the sphere of national security in terms of international influences. Examination of his report (which ultimately led to the National Security Act) reveals interesting patterns of language during this period of conceptual transition from defense to security. It was this watershed report that would lay the groundwork of an American strategic paradigm at odds with the concept of grand strategy. Specifically, Eberstadt’s recommendations about a postwar organization included the establishment of two organizations, the National Security Council and the National Security Resources Board. The report provided that the National Security Council would be responsible for “maintaining active, close, and continuous contact between the departments and agencies of our Government responsible, respectively, for our foreign and military policies and their implementation.”<sup>46</sup> The National Security Resources Board was designed to be “responsible for national domestic and economic issues.”<sup>47</sup> This intentional separation of foreign and military policy (as national security) from domestic and economic issues is the seed of the US security paradigm making it central to this thesis and critical to the subsequent comparison of US National Security Strategy against grand strategy.

Following WWII, President Truman presented to Congress what became known as the Truman doctrine. He portrayed a vision for the US which was a significant

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, III – VII.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 7-10 and specifically exhibit 1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

migration away from conservative involvement in international affairs. Concurrently, the Marshall Plan, an economic aid scheme aimed at stabilizing US interest in Europe, signaled US aspirations as a world power intent on establishing influence in the international community. These two events served to solidify a course for American foreign policy, and in concert with the Eberstadt report were responsible for completing America's evolution to the paradigm of national security.<sup>48</sup> As Ronald Steel discusses in his article *The New Meaning of Security*, the definition of world security is open for debate, but this does not diminish the significance of the US recognition that international involvement, and protection of US assets abroad, had permanently altered Washington's concept of national security.<sup>49</sup>

The Cold War and its establishment of a bipolar international community solidified this concept and the US paradigm of national security. America worked to establish itself as a global power and positive presence, while the Soviet Union was perceived as a threat to this stability. The spread of communism during these formative policy years would dominate the development of a US national security concept. In broad terms, the nation's security objectives focused on containment of communism and deterrence of nuclear war. Aside from the resultant strategies not being overly well-defined, these objectives and their focused perspectives resulted in a national security *structure* ultimately limited in scope.<sup>50</sup>

Following the demise of the Soviet Union, regional power struggles became increasingly unstable and fragmented. Greater volatility in the world order was primarily

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<sup>48</sup> Jordan, 3-10, Steel, 50-60, and Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusion: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY Cornell University, 2006), 39-50.

<sup>49</sup> The implication is political leadership in Washington D.C., Steel, 52-55.

<sup>50</sup> Karl P. Magyar, *Challenge and Response* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1994). 23-27.

due to the large numbers of transitional states trying to establish their independence and sovereignty. Nationalism and ethnic movements added fuel to the fire resulting in the potential for conflict in numerous regions of the world. In concert with this instability, the capacity of nation states to pursue individual interests was restricted by the increasing tendency towards international interdependence.

During this period, Jordan highlights a trend in the development of national security towards a greater increase of interdependence between domestic affairs, economics, foreign affairs and national security.<sup>51</sup> Close interdependent relationships between these elements of national policy were minimal for most of the twentieth century and nations effectively managed national security by dealing separately with the issues of national defense (military power), foreign affairs and certain aspects of domestic policy (budget). Until the mid 1970s, the domestic politics of military forces, and certain aspects of the defense programs, were considered separate from the more political and diplomatic concerns of foreign policy and issues in world politics. Jordan argues that economic interdependence and the rise of international economic and environmental institutions has forced closer relationships between these elements of policy. As a result of the continuing change and unpredictable nature of the post-Cold War international political environment, these relationships have actually become more complex than Jordan suggests.<sup>52</sup> As Steel observes, the US concept of national security "...is a social construct. It came into being at a specific time and in response to a specific set of circumstances. Those circumstances governed the way we defined the term then, and

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<sup>51</sup> Jordan, 3-20, 65-75.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 3-20, 65-75.

continue to define it now.”<sup>53</sup> American preoccupation with Cold War threats overshadowed the changing international environment and continues to impair US ability to adequately balance instruments of national power.<sup>54</sup> This outdated security perspective has been problematic since the end of WWII, continuing through the end of the Cold War until this day. It is this ‘lens of security’ perspective that has hindered a transition to a new and more appropriate US grand strategic paradigm.

With all this in mind, it is necessary to establish a clear concept of national security to support the remainder of this paper. JP 1-02 aptly defines security as, “a condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensure a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences.”<sup>55</sup> Of national security it states, “a collective term encompassing both national defense and foreign relations of the United States. Specifically, the condition provided by a). military or defense advantage over any foreign nation or group of nations; b). a favorable foreign relations position; or c). a defense posture capable of successfully resisting hostile or destructive action from within or without, overt or covert. *See also security*”<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately this definition is too vague and has marginal utility in any context. The new Oxford American dictionary (2005) defines security, “The state of being free from danger or threat.” The same dictionary provides that national suggests “of or pertaining to the nation.” It is logical then to presume national security can safely be regarded as “A nation’s state of being free from danger or threat.” Although this is an accurate definition, it is somewhat clinical

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<sup>53</sup> Steel, 51.

<sup>54</sup> Jordan, 4-5.

<sup>55</sup> JP 1-02 (2006).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

and needs to be placed within a context to establish a practical concept that will remain the standard for purposes of this thesis.

An excellent contemporary meaning of national security can be found in Jordan's *American National Security* where he writes, national security "...has a more extensive meaning than protection from physical harm; it also implies protection, through a variety of means, of economic and political interests, the loss of which could threaten the fundamental values and vitality of the state."<sup>57</sup> This concise definition provides a glimpse into a key aspect of national security; specifically, it is about protection. Linking this observation to the national interest discussion in this chapter it becomes clear that national security is only one of the core national interests. When compared to US policy the American approach to higher strategy, via the national security strategy, has been decidedly one-sided ignoring the other core national interests (an issue that will be discussed in coming pages).

Having established definitions for, and a conceptual understanding of, national interests, elements of national power, grand strategy and national security, it is now time to explore the use of these terms through a historical perspective which framed and solidified the US national security paradigm.

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<sup>57</sup> Jordan, 3

## CHAPTER THREE

## HISTORY AND PARADIGMS

*“Hegel was right when he said that we learn from history that man can never learn anything from history.”*

George Bernard Shaw<sup>58</sup>

July 26th, 2007 will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the United States National Security Act (NSA). The purpose of the Act, which also created the National Security Council (NSC), was to fundamentally reorganize the national security framework of the United States (reference the national security discussion on page 20-21). Proponents of the reform recognized that no institutional means for the co-ordination of foreign and defense policy existed, and the informal management techniques employed by Presidents Roosevelt and Truman – during and after World War II – would not withstand the complex nature of the looming new world order. The aftermath of WWII brought new challenges, threats and increased world responsibilities to a nation that for 150 years professed a singular foreign affairs policy, namely isolationism.<sup>59</sup>

Nearly 45 years later the world order experienced another fundamental transformation. The end of the Cold War and demise of the Soviet Union once again brought new challenges, threats and increased world responsibilities to the US. This second, and arguably most important transformation, occurred nearly two decades ago and yet the framework (that is the process and products) of US national security

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<sup>58</sup> George Bernard Shaw, available from <http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes>; accessed 21 January 2007.

<sup>59</sup> Stanley L. Falk and T.W. Bauer, *National Security Management – The National Security Structure* (Washington: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1972), 2-3.

structures remains relatively unchanged.<sup>60</sup> In his essay *Reorganizing America's Security Establishment* Gregory Foster comments, "The US is trapped in the psychic prison of the Cold War."<sup>61</sup>

The origin of the current US national security process is the National Security Act of 1947. However, the mindset which framed the development of the NSA and the national security process has existed since the development of the US Constitution. Falk reminds us that, "Americans have a healthy distrust of concentration of power."<sup>62</sup> The manifestation of this distrust is found in the elaborate three-branch scheme of government created to ensure checks and balances of power. Foremost in the system of checks and balances is the important aspect of civilian control of the military. For over two centuries American national security organizations have been heavily influenced by the Constitutional directive to maintain civilian command of the armed forces.<sup>63</sup>

During the nineteenth century this mindset, and its resultant process of government, remained relatively unchanged. The lack of aggressive or hostile nations bordering the US and its relative isolation from Europe or Asia contributed to an overall sense of security; this traditional sense of security, combined with the people's aversion to large standing armies, resulted in little more than a token military establishment. Within this limited military organization were two distinct services, the Army and Navy. Separate entities, they were established, organized and funded by two distinct legislative committees. The institutional means for coordinating these military instruments of power

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<sup>60</sup> Jablonsky, 7-10.

<sup>61</sup> Greg D Foster, "Reorganizing America's Security Establishment", *US Domestic and National Security Agendas Into the Twenty-First Century*, Edited by S Sarkesian and J M Flanagan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 159, 168-9.

<sup>62</sup> Falk, 2.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 1-8.

and the requisite joint defense policy were non-existent. Likewise, no institutional mechanisms were in place for ensuring the coordination and co-operation of the Army and Navy with other government agencies responsible for making national security policy.<sup>64</sup>

Not until the end of the nineteenth century would the course of world events draw the US reluctantly into international affairs. Involvement in world politics was still limited, largely due to the nation's insular beliefs, and the established military remained small and isolated from the policy and decision making system of government. Small improvements in this system did come as a result of participation in the Spanish American War, but they were made strictly in military organizations and no advance was made towards harmonizing the elements of government responsible for national security. America entered WWI lacking an adequate national security structure and unprepared to mobilize its forces for major conflict.<sup>65</sup>

The US involvement in WWI perpetuated the nation's isolationist sentiment. Understandably, the American people retained no interest in planning for future conflicts in which they did not intend to become involved. However, the US leadership did realize the need for organizational improvement, particularly to combat the Great Depression, and during the inter-war period government agencies grew in number, became better staffed and equipped, and developed greater administrative and resource skills. Advances in economic research, and the experience of coping with the Great Depression, brought a much clearer and more widespread understanding of the nature and functioning of the national economy. When the US entered WWII it was with an improved

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<sup>64</sup> Falk, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 3.

administrative structure, a greater capacity to organize and produce military capability, and the enhanced ability to design and apply economic controls. By analyzing and appraising the experience of WWI, America was able to develop a blueprint to mobilize the military in a national crisis.<sup>66</sup>

In the aftermath of WWII it was clear that the US was the most powerful nation in the world. Unfortunately, America's participation in the war, however successful in the main, had identified many fundamental weaknesses in the nation's security apparatus. Presidential advisers, paranoid of the communist and nuclear threat, recommended a revised national security structure designed to prevent the occurrence of WWII. Both legislative elements of the US government unanimously agreed that America required a far more sophisticated national security structure. The 1947 Senate Armed Services Committee report and its counterpart from the House of Representatives acknowledged the need for fundamental change. On 26 July 1947, the President signed Public Law 253, establishing the National Security Act.<sup>67</sup>

### **The United States National Security Act of 1947**

The National Security Act States, "In enacting this legislation, it is the intent of Congress to provide a comprehensive program for the future security of the United States; to provide for the establishment of integrated policies and procedures for the departments, agencies and functions of the Government relating to the national

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> The House called for the creation of a new security structure that would (1) help ensure the coordination of our domestic, foreign, and military policies on an informed basis; (2) facilitate the integration of our military services and their unified strategic direction and command; (3) assist in taking full advantage of our resources of personnel, materials scientific research, and development; (4) preserve the integrity and more fully exploit the capabilities of all components of ground, sea and air forces; and (5) provide for continued civilian direction and control. For further comments see Foster, 164-166 and Falk, 5-6.

security...”<sup>68</sup> The National Security Act was primarily aimed at improving the organizational and managerial framework to coordinate military, foreign and domestic issues within a specified scheme of national policies and objectives. It established and organized the following significant entities: the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Secretary of Defense (SecDef); the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Joint Staff; the department of the Air Force and Secretary of the Air Force; the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); and the National Security Council (NSC). Foster notes, “What the National Security Act produced was an organizational engine to keep the country running in a permanent state of limited mobilization...the result was a security posture dominated by military concerns and priorities.”<sup>69</sup> Effectively, the Act had redefined the American perspective on security to encompass a more comprehensive and international posture, a more outward looking orientation than the traditional US notion of defense. However, it was this orientation that would forge the core of a paradigmatic trap for US policy makers over the last sixty years.<sup>70</sup>

The National Security Council was created as part of a general reorganization of the U.S. national security apparatus. Proponents of the reform realized that no institutional means for the coordination of foreign and defense policy existed, and that the informal management techniques employed by President Roosevelt during the war and President Truman after the war were not suitable for the long haul. The purpose of the NSC was “to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military

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<sup>68</sup> Senate Committee on Armed Services, *National Security Act of 1947; as amended through December 31, 1969* (Washington: GPO, 1970), 1.

<sup>69</sup> Foster, 166.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to co-operate more effectively in matters involving the national security.”<sup>71</sup> The National Security Act created the NSC under the chairmanship of the President, with the following as members: the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, the three service secretaries, and others (designated by the President with agreement from Senate).<sup>72</sup> The Act provided that at the President's direction the NSC could weigh risks to national security and give advice to the President. Flexibility was intentionally designed into the framework of the NSC to accommodate presidential personalities and leadership styles.

Key to maintaining this flexible structure was the decision to establish the position of Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, or National Security Advisor, although neither the National Security Act of 1947 nor subsequent amendments provided for this position. Effectively this action eliminated the requirement for the National Security Advisor to be ‘accepted’ by the legislative body through the process of confirmation. The purpose of this action, in 1947, was to soften the appearance of usurping presidential powers.

In conjunction with the ‘personal assistant’ characteristics of this national security post, it was decided to leave utilization of the NSC almost entirely up to presidential prerogative. Because of its adaptable design this arrangement has resulted in the large variations in the degree of reliance the President has placed on the National Security Advisor and the NSC.<sup>73</sup> The idealistic view that the NSC was created to coordinate political and military departments quickly gave way to the reality that the NSC would

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<sup>71</sup> *National Security Act of 1947*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> National Security Council, “History of the National Security Council”; available from [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov); accessed 17 Jan 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Further details of this phenomenon are discussed in Appendix A.

exist to serve individual needs of each President. As a result every President since 1947 has tried to implement a policy-making and coordination system that avoided the problems and deficiencies of previous administrations and reflected their personal leadership styles. Over the years, largely due to either a clash of personalities, departmental parochialism, or the realities of democratic plurality, the NSC has become a means of controlling and managing competing departments instead of fostering collegiality among departments.<sup>74</sup>

Examination of history shows each US President has focused on changing the NSC staff process, establishing new directive naming standards and replacing key personnel. This practice has resulted in the inability to shed the national security paradigm developed during the Cold War.<sup>75</sup> As will be discussed in the next section, this paradigmatic entrapment continued through 1986 as the Congress sought more improvements to national defense.

### **The Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (Goldwater-Nichols Act)**

Politico-military events converged during the decade of 1980 to force change in US defense organization. Military failures, such as the failed attempt to rescue American hostages in Iran and the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, caused US Congressional leadership to doubt the ability of the Armed Forces to execute its mission. Additionally, as James Locher describes, “In the early 1980s, powerful army, navy, air

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<sup>74</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the history of the NSC and further explanation of each administration’s idiosyncrasies and methods of NSC implementation see National Security Council, “History of the National Security Council”; available from [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov); accessed 17 Jan 2007.

<sup>75</sup> For a detailed discussion of the different styles and organizational approach of each President since the NSCs inception see National Security Council, “History of the National Security Council”; available from [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov); accessed 17 Jan 2007, and Falk, 12-32.

force, and Marine Corps officials and organizations dominated the Pentagon....The services wielded their influence more to protect their independence and prerogatives than to develop multiservice commands capable of waging modern warfare. They also blunted efforts to make their separate forces, weapons and systems interoperable.”<sup>76</sup> As a result, Congressional debate about the need for further reorganization of the military establishment increased.

Finally, in 1986 Congress passed the Defense Department Reorganization Act (also known as the Goldwater-Nichols Act or GNA).<sup>77</sup> This amendment to the National Security Act of 1947 established far reaching changes to the politico-military establishment due to Congressional opinion that it was dysfunctional, unresponsive and inefficient. These perceptions, the international environment and competition for limited resources drove historic debates in Congress and resulted in a watershed document for the Department of Defense.<sup>78</sup> A report accompanying the GNA states,

The purpose of this bill is to:

- (1) improve the quality and enhance the role of professional military advice
- (2) strengthen civilian control of the military
- (3) ensure that senior civilian decision-makers receive the full range of divergent military advice
- (4) strengthen the representation of the joint military perspective and improve the performance of joint military duties
- (5) improve the preparation of, and incentives for, military officers in joint duty positions
- (6) enhance the warfighting capabilities of US military forces by strengthening the authority of the unified and specified combatant commanders
- (7) increase the decentralization of authority within the Department of Defense
- (8) clarify the operational chain of command

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<sup>76</sup> James R Locher, *Victory on the Potomac* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 15.

<sup>77</sup> For an account of service parochial attitudes and the events leading up to the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 see Locher, 15-30.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* 3-356.

- (9) reduce and streamline the defense bureaucracy
- (10) reduce the burdens of congressional oversight of the Department of Defense
- (11) increase top management attention to the formulation of military strategy, planning for contingencies, and the setting of priorities among major military missions
- (12) provide for the more efficient use of resources
- (13) improve the supervision and control of common supply and service agencies (Defense Agencies and Department of Defense Field Activities)
- (14) clarify the roles, responsibilities, and authority of senior civilian officials and senior military officers of the Department of Defense
- (15) amend title 10, United States Code, to make it fully consistent with the basic principles of the National Security Act of 1947<sup>79</sup>

After close examination of this passage it is clear that, at least in the view of the the committee, focus of the GNA centered on the Department of Defense and civilian control of the military. In fact, second to improving the quality of military advice (to the President and Congress) it unequivocally states the purpose is to; “strengthen civilian control of the military”<sup>80</sup> (paragraph (2) above).

However, a much smaller portion of this 1986 bill also amended the National Security Act of 1947 and required significant changes to the existing national security process. As a result of concerns over resources and strategic planning, Congress also desired a process to link national security with defense programming (budgets) through identification of vital national interests within a formal presidential strategy. This portion of the Goldwater-Nichols Act was an attempt to legislate the formulation of a national strategy that would make sensible use of limited resources in the pursuit of national

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<sup>79</sup> Committee on Armed Services, *Goldwater-Nichols Department Of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986: Conference Report* (Washington: GPO, 1986), 1-2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

security.<sup>81</sup> In effect, the Goldwater-Nichols Act established the annual requirement for the president to submit and publish a National Security Strategy Report (NSS) to the United States Congress. The legislation states:

Sec. 104. (a)1 The President shall transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States (hereinafter in this section referred to as a 'national security strategy report').

(2) The national security strategy report for any year shall be transmitted on the day on which the President submits to Congress the budget for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of title 31, United States Code.

(b) Each national security strategy report shall set forth the national security strategy of the United States and shall include a comprehensive description and discussion of the following:

(1) The worldwide interests, goals and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.

(2) 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.

(3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military and other elements of national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1).

(4) 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 national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.

(5) Such other measures as may be helpful to inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States.

(c) Each national security strategy report shall be transmitted in both a classified and an unclassified form.<sup>82</sup>

Analysis of the above language reveals no reference to grand strategy; in fact military is the only strategy that is specifically mentioned. Is it fair to assume this was intentional, or did the framers believe national security was the only interest? Did they believe

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<sup>81</sup> Leo A. Mercado, *The National Security Strategy and National Interests: Quantity or Quality?* Thesis (Carlisle Barracks: United States Army War College, 2002), 1, and Don M Snider, *The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995), 1-6.

<sup>82</sup> U.S Statutes at Large, *PL 99-433 §603* (Washington: GPO, 1989).

ensuring security would result in the preservation of other national interests? If either is true it is probably the latter because, as discussed in chapter two, the Cold War security paradigm and our strategic posture of containment suggests the nations leadership believed national security would lead to the preservation of other national interests.

Additionally, it is apparent that Congressional controls of the military and associated budgets were of primary concern during the drafting of this legislation.<sup>83</sup> Further examination of the report accompanying the legislation reveals some interesting language with regards to national defense and security. For example the report states, “The committee believes that a report on national security strategy will provide an extremely useful framework for the work of the authorizing committees dealing with the national defense and foreign policy,” This particular sentence in isolation would lead the reader to believe two specific things about the committee’s perspective. First, that budget oversight was the underlying reason behind the National Security Strategy and second (perhaps more relevant here) Congress considered national defense and foreign policy to be the *two* elements of national security and national security to be the overarching strategy of the nation. Remember, since 1947 the strategic lens was national security and this paradigm was consistent with the perspective of the authors of the NSA as well as the GNA.

In a curious and conflicting continuation the next paragraph states,

Military strategy is but one, albeit the most visible element of U.S. national security strategy. A comprehensive national security strategy also includes diplomatic and political components, including arms control initiatives; economic components covering trade, international investment, and technology transfer controls; international economic and security assistance programs; and information programs designed to promote international awareness of key events and American policies. The

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<sup>83</sup> *Goldwater-Nichols Report*, 2-6.

committee believes that the work of the Congress would be more effective if it received a coordinated, comprehensive description of the role of these various components in the national security strategy of the United States.<sup>84</sup>

Initially, it appears the committee understands and is describing the premise of grand strategy (as provided in this paper). However, it is unclear whether their list is all inclusive or representative of the wider ‘components.’ The committee’s use of the term components itself is curious because the DIME construct for ‘elements’ of national power was very common in 1986. Additionally, it is unclear why the authors isolate the other components by only qualifying the military component as ‘strategy.’ Without being pedantic, it is impossible to suggest exactly what the authors are trying to communicate. One point is clear, a consistent understanding and use of the terms and concepts relating to defense, security and strategy is *not* demonstrated; both in this paragraph and within the language of the GNA itself. This lack of clarity is unhelpful and reflects the political consensus process by which such documents are created.<sup>85</sup> This phenomenon will be discussed in more detail within chapter four.

The sections within this chapter have provided a brief history of the two main legislative documents responsible for shaping the US perspective on national security and creating the process by which American strategy is developed. As Jablonsky states, “the transformation in strategy occurred in the rapidly unfolding events immediately after WWII with the adjustment not only to international involvement in peacetime but the mantle of global leadership as well. National strategy...now emerged as something infinitely more complex and multilayered for American leaders, involving all national

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Jervis. “US Grand Strategy: Mission Impossible” Naval War College Review Summer 1998 and Clark A Murdock, *Improving the Practice of National Security Strategy: A New Approach for the Post-Cold War World* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 13.

elements of power to form long-term domestic and foreign policies.”<sup>86</sup> Drawing the threads from chapter two and combining them with the lessons of history and the resultant paradigms the following chapter will consider the critical question of this thesis, is the US National Security Strategy grand strategy or propaganda?

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<sup>86</sup> David Jablonsky, “Why is Strategy Difficult?” *The Search for Strategy: Politics and Strategic Vision*, Edited by Gary L. Guertner (Carlisle Barracks: Greenwood Press, 1993), 15.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GRAND STRATEGY OR PROPAGANDA?

*“Language is the source of misunderstandings.”*

Antoine de Saint-Exupery<sup>87</sup>

In order to provide an assessment of the US National Security Strategy relative to grand strategy, it is necessary to evaluate the NSS against four criteria. First, what was the *intent* of the NSA and the GNA with regard to the NSS versus grand strategy? Second, based on the particular type of democracy, is the US government even capable of producing a comprehensive grand strategy? Third, in practice, is the National Security Strategy simply one of the president’s means to communicate security concerns to a wide audience, both domestic and international? Finally, and perhaps most important, does the NSS conceptually fit the definition of grand strategy?

#### **Congressional Intent**

Reflecting on the development of the watershed documents that established the institution and processes that produces the National Security Strategy, several things are evident. First, the prevailing attitude in the United States was influenced by the perceived presence of a credible physical threat, mainly the spread of communism. Second, this perception and prevailing attitude manifested itself in a political paradigm in which a threat to US physical security became the overriding priority in a domestic environment of limited resources. Finally, given this and the Congressional desire to exert more influence over the military (at both times in history, 1947 and 1986, due to the

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<sup>87</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupery, available from <http://www.quotationspage.com>, accessed 27 October 2006.

perception of military developmental and operational failures), it is hard to argue that Congressional drafters of these laws were trying to implement the concept and institutional understanding of American *grand* strategy.

Congress made it clear within the NSA, “it is the intent of Congress to provide a comprehensive program for the future security of the United States of America.”<sup>88</sup>

Establishment of the National Security Council was within a greater context of solving wide spread institutional problems characterized by a lack of cooperation, integration and financial oversight. As stated in the NSA, “The function of the Council shall be to advise the President...so as to enable the military services and the other departments and agencies of the Government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security”<sup>89</sup>

Still embroiled in the defining conflict of their generation, the legislative leaders sought more improvement in the organization and oversight of the military during the decade beginning in 1980. As discussed in chapter 3, the pressures behind the Goldwater-Nichols Act were military failures and the inability of military leadership to engage in negotiations regarding the establishment of joint force competencies and capabilities.<sup>90</sup> In fact, the language establishing the National Security Strategy in the Goldwater-Nichols Act played an even smaller role (physically) than establishment of the National Security Council did in the National Security Act of 1947. In reviewing the stated purpose of Goldwater-Nichols (chapter 3, page 33), noticeably absent is any stated purpose for the NSS report. However, on review of the language establishing the NSS the Congress wrote,

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<sup>88</sup> *National Security Act of 1947*, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *National Security Act of 1947*, 2.

<sup>90</sup> Locher, 277-356

...Sec 104...

(b) Each national security strategy report shall set forth the national security strategy of the United States and shall include a comprehensive description and discussion of the following:

(1) The worldwide interests, goals and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.<sup>91</sup>

While not exceptionally conclusive, this is *the only* evidence of purpose for the NSS within the actual document. Given the amount and strength of language regarding reorganization of the military, it is hard to argue the case that requiring the NSS was anything more than establishment of increased Congressional oversight of the military institution.<sup>92</sup>

There are many examples of this paradigmatic entrapment that influenced the nation's leaders and compelled them to focus solely on security and the military defense issues surrounding national strategy. During a hearing on the US National Security Strategy, Representative Ike Skelton's remarks typified the paradigm: "...as you consider a new (National Security) strategy, it is important to keep in mind, both with our friends and potential enemies, that they are watching us today...in what you say and in response to our questions...I would like to point out that back in 1948 when President Truman air-lifted supplies to the people of Berlin...he got it right...Ronald Reagan got it right, too. He restored the strength of America's military posture."<sup>93</sup> Additionally, in March of 2001, Representative Bob Stump in his opening statement noted, "Today the committee meets to hear testimony regarding America's national security for the next decade and beyond. Because budgets must flow from and support strategy, this hearing is intended to

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<sup>91</sup> The full excerpt is also available in chapter three of the *Goldwater-Nichols Report*, 1-2.

<sup>92</sup> Locher, 277-356.

<sup>93</sup> U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services. *U.S. National Security Strategy and the Quadrennial Defense Review*. 107th Congress. 1st Session. 2001. 2

begin laying the groundwork for the consideration of the fiscal 2002 defense budget.”<sup>94</sup>

If the NSS was intended to be an articulation of American grand strategy then its importance would be unmistakable. Surely its importance would rise at or above the level of Congressional oversight of the US military. In practice this is not the case. Giving proof to the assertion that US strategic policy is trapped in the Cold War security paradigm, NSS matters are handled by the Committee on Armed Services and as seen above are largely debates about defense spending. As further evidence, a successful effort to amend the 1947 NSA was made in 1958. This amendment, known as the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1958, was presented as an act “To promote the national defense by providing for Reorganization of the Department of Defense...”<sup>95</sup> The use of the phrase ‘promote the national defense’ is clearly deliberate as the authors, post-Korea conflict, are still focused on security through defense against communism in the Cold War paradigm (another example of the previously discussed paradigmatic entrapment).

Starting with the humble beginnings of the National Security Council it is readily apparent that from inception, and over time, primacy belonged to physical security in the hearts and minds of the US political leadership. Additionally, the NSS was a means for Congress to get increased oversight on military expenditures which, necessarily, were matters of defense and budgetary restraint. What Congress did not ask for was a coherent family of strategies that articulate how the president intends to preserve *all* national interest utilizing elements of national power. Gary Hart observes, “The Cold War had the

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<sup>94</sup> This is his opening statement to the Committee on Armed Services. U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Armed Services. *U.S. National Security Strategy*. 107th Congress. 1st Session. 2001, 1.

<sup>95</sup> Another amendment to the NSA was implemented in 1949; however, no changes relevant to this paper occurred during that amendment, *National Security Act of 1947*, 65.

curious advantage of offering a large national purpose and a simple, understandable one at that. It was a kind of central organizing principle around which political and military policies could be shaped, resources mustered and the public engaged. For the period between 1946 and 1991, it became a simplified form of grand strategy for the United States and many of its allies.”<sup>96</sup> This is not to imply that legislators did not have the best interest of American citizens on their mind, however, within their Cold War paradigm, they acted in such a manner that security was the most important national interest, often at the exclusion of others.

Admittedly, it is impossible to get into the minds of executive and legislative leadership from these two defining eras. Having examined evidence, in their own hand, it is difficult to believe, however, that either of these watershed documents was anything other than a natural and reasonable response to what appeared as the greatest priority of their respective decades, ensuring physical security through efficiency and effectiveness from the military and Department of Defense.

The previous section dealt with Congressional intent. In order to complete the argument the following section will discuss the reality of US democratic processes.

### **Pluralism and Consensus**

Clark Murdock asserts, “...the search for one overarching grand strategy for the post-Cold War era is fruitless.”<sup>97</sup> Based on his comment the question can be asked, is grand strategy an idealistic dream? It is no more idealistic than the formation of a more perfect union in the quest for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is the position

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<sup>96</sup> Gary Hart, *The Fourth Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>97</sup> Murdock, 41.

of this study that grand strategy is an attainable reality, but development of grand strategy will not be easy; in fact, the more viable and meaningful a grand strategy is, the more complex it's development is likely to be. Two related issues that have complicated the development of a meaningful US grand strategy are the pluralistic nature of the NSS process and the already discussed paradigmatic trap of post-Cold War leadership. It is the latter of these that drives the mindset of security as the only necessary component of US strategy.

Given the absence of a Cold War-like unifying threat and the complex interaction of values, resources, and security in recent history, the US democratic system has settled into policy by consensus. In the pluralistic world of the US government, political scientist Robert Jervis believes that in the post-Cold War era, the making of foreign policy will become much more like the making of domestic policy. He states, "In summary, the United States has a fragmented political system in an external environment in which no single interest, threat or value predominates...The United States will 'muddle through'...rather than follow a coherent plan."<sup>98</sup> It is the national security process that is most greatly affected by this phenomenon. Murdock reasserts Richard Betts' point that the very nature makes it antistrategic, when he writes: "Bold strokes reflecting broad strategic choices are the exception; incremental steps that modify existing strategy are the norm."<sup>99</sup> Neither the NSS nor the NSC process is grand strategy. Through pluralism and the publication of 11 different national strategies Washington has over-strategized the nation in order to compensate for the lack of a grand strategy.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Jervis, and Murdock, 13.

<sup>99</sup> Murdock, 13.

<sup>100</sup> The eleven strategies include 9 Presidential strategies and 2 departmental strategies. They are National Security Strategy, Western Hemisphere Strategy, National Strategy for Combating WMD, National

This strategic paralysis is the result of over four decades of focusing national efforts in the sole interest of security and the ulterior motives of fiscal oversight and civilian control of the military. Additionally, the NSS construct is severely hampered by the process itself. As Murdock states, “As is the case with most government documents produced by an inclusive interagency process, NSS statements are usually least-common denominator documents that tout an administration’s accomplishments but yield little insight into how the United States might act in a future situation.”<sup>101</sup> The most recent 2006 NSS is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Nearly half of each section is a reflection of accomplishments during the administration’s first term.

This dilemma of least common-denominator documents is a problem of application, not a problem of theory. Suggesting that grand strategy is impossible, because recent administrations have not embraced and developed one is truly throwing the baby out with the bath water. Current strategic paralysis is brought on by a mix of political correctness, pluralism and lack of a readily identifiable threat. For example, in Iraq these elements have manifested themselves in the muddling through the desire for a change in strategic course, culminating with the publication of the Iraq Study Group’s recommendations. The long awaited recommendations had far less impact than expected and failed to galvanize the new Democratic Congress. The report has instead created more discontent and disagreement on both the methods and recommendations across many branches and departments of the government.<sup>102</sup>

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Strategy for Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets, National Strategy for Secure Cyberspace, National Strategy for Homeland Security, National Strategy for Maritime Security, National Drug Control Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and National Military Strategy. According to a presentation given by the pentagon’s J5 staff at the Joint Forces Staff College in 2005, the US government has an additional fourteen department level strategies. Most of these are departmental strategic plans.

<sup>101</sup> Murdock, 9.

<sup>102</sup> CBS Face the Nation, Sunday December 10, 2006.

In an optimistic note Jablonsky concludes that a true grand strategy is not practically impossible by stating, “What we need is a strategic vision that is realistic, achievable and likely to achieve political consensus...”<sup>103</sup> His point is that political consensus does not have to equal strategic paralysis. The paralysis is the result of a lack in strategic vision caused by the national security paradigm, which experience shows needs a clearly defined threat to endure. This reality is a direct result of the paradigmatic entrapment discussed throughout this paper. The legacy of the US national security process is deeply rooted in a Cold War security paradigm, framed by a defense policy perspective.

With regard to the necessity of a unifying threat to produce grand strategy, as Drew points out, “In the real world, it is impossible to remove risk altogether for at least two related reasons. The first is that there is honest disagreement among those who make policy about what the threats are, how serious they are, and which are in need of being reduced and to what degree....The other constraint is on the resources available to counter the threat.”<sup>104</sup> Without a clearly defined threat the US policy-maker is *not* doomed to flounder, but it will make the task more challenging. As we search the past for common threads in our US national security one thing is clear, with a defined threat, we have clearly defined policy. On the contrary when there is no clear threat, policy and decision makers have to sift through a myriad of opinions, threat briefs, and governmental agencies trying to sell their particular brand of threat or risk to the US. Following the attacks of 9/11 Americans galvanized overnight forging a Cold War-like security environment that everyone was familiar and comfortable with. However, as

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<sup>103</sup> Jablonsky, 37.

<sup>104</sup> Dennis Drew, *Making Strategy – An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1988), xv.

Murdock observes, and as recent elections and the divide between political parties confirm, the new threat of global terrorism lacks the compelling nature of the old Soviet threat, which in effect imposed a semblance of order on a decidedly unruly political system.<sup>105</sup>

These realities make development of grand strategy demanding, but not impossible. What pluralism, and its resultant challenges in this environment suggest, is that perhaps there is too much Congressional involvement. If consensus is thwarted by the politics of politics, the logical solution is elimination of the obstacles. The lesson is not that it is impossible to create grand strategy without a threat, but rather that six decades of a unipolar strategic paradigm will ultimately lead to the strategic paralysis of a nation's leadership. All this stands as evidence that the national security paradigm and the NSS process is in a state of collapse and its supporters in denial. Personalities, pluralism, politics and an inability to appreciate the true nature of grand strategy have combined to cause the failure of our government's grand strategic vision.

The US political system is not a limiting factor in the understanding and creation of practical grand strategy. More accurately, the practitioners within the US political system are capable of producing a comprehensive grand strategy. In order to accomplish this, the Cold War paradigm of security must be shed and hard work put forth to develop a true grand strategy that will ensure the survival of US values and enduring principals. The NSA and GNA are both excellent examples of leadership during challenging times; preservation of American values can only be secured through courageous leadership, conviction and resolve.

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<sup>105</sup> Murdock, 3-4.

### Security Strategy or Grand Strategy

Utilizing the definition provided in chapter two, grand strategy is the articulation of a national vision that uses all the elements of national power, military and non military, to ensure the long-term preservation and enhancement of a countries core national interests. A fair question to revisit at this stage is, is the delineation between national security strategy and grand strategy only a matter of semantics? Quite simply, the NSS is not the definitional or conceptual equivalent of grand strategy. It is not a matter of semantics; a critical distinction exists in the aims of grand strategy and the aims of the NSS. As previously discussed, security is only one of America's core national interests and more importantly, the attainment of security will not necessarily lead to the preservation of the remaining national interests. That is, security alone will not lead to desired values. Through limiting its scope, by definition, the NSS falls short of an American grand strategy. What is required is the acknowledgement of core national interests (via the construct in chapter two) followed by a vision to preserve these interests, via elements of national power, resulting in the articulation of a viable grand strategy for the United States. As Jordan observes, "A chronic source of presidential difficulties with the Congress and, sometimes, the nation at large is the tendency to see the concept of national security overly broadly."<sup>106</sup> It is this tendency, a result of the Cold War paradigm since 1947, which resulted in a failure of true grand strategic thought in the United States. Gary Hart adds, "We do not have a coherent framework for applying our powers to achieve large national purposes. There is not even a consensus as

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<sup>106</sup> Jordan, 4.

to what our national purposes are. We are much clearer about the sheer fact of our power than we are about how when, where, and toward what ends it should be used.”<sup>107</sup>

Murdock provides an enlightening perspective to this reality. He states, “A retrospective examination of the US track record from the end of the Cold War, particularly in the early Clinton years, to September 11, 2001, reveals no consistent or coherent pattern of actions to suggest the purposeful pursuit of a strategy by the world’s most powerful nation. Ad hoc crisis management, episodic engagement, drift on underlying issues, and the pursuit of ambitious objectives on the cheap seemed to be the norm, not the exception...”<sup>108</sup> As further evidence of the divide between application and theory, Gary Hart offers, “During the unstructured, post-Cold War 1990s the President’s national security adviser was heard to disclaim any notion of an overarching strategy and to advocate an ad hoc approach to the crises that might (and did) arise. This reactive approach certainly is an alternative to grand strategy.”<sup>109</sup> This philosophical disconnect between grand strategy and practice is what has served the nation so poorly in the most recent decades.

As the most recent example of how far removed from constitutional ideals recent administrations have been, one only needs to look to the release of the most recent NSS. Stephen Hadley announced, “...today we released the President’s NSS, which explains the strategic underpinning of his foreign policy...America’s policy – and its purpose – is to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.” Hadley continues, “It is a strategy that protects America’s vital interests, reflects America’s history, and

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<sup>107</sup> Gary Hart, 3.

<sup>108</sup> Murdock, 3.

<sup>109</sup> Gary Hart, 13.

promotes America's highest ideals."<sup>110</sup> Based even on the short constitutional review in this paper it is highly debatable that ending tyranny and spreading democracy reflects either America's ideals or traditions. Given the real traditions of American history Hadley's perversion of reality on the release of the President's NSS is ironic at best. It is doubtful that the framers of the Constitution would agree that America's national purpose is to impose democratic institutions and end tyranny across the globe.

This current state of affairs is the result of inadvertent consequences caused by complex circumstances since the end of the Cold War. These circumstances include globalization, advances in technology, a rise in transnational terror groups and the influence of the neo-conservatives within the current and previous term of this administration. The resultant politico-military environment has driven a more aggressive, and imperialistic approach to American security. This practice drives a modus operandi that tends to shape and influence others instead of preserving American core national values (Operation IRAQI FREEDOM for example).<sup>111</sup> It is this move away from founding values that most affects America's current strategic paradigm. As Gary Hart notes, "Of all the constraints...which most require attention in devising a grand strategy, American adherence to its own principles offers the most compelling challenge."<sup>112</sup> Paul Kennedy adds that grand strategy *must* take into account a large number of factors including, "...the issue of national moral and political culture."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Remarks of Stephen Hadley at the United States Institute of Peace, 16 March 2006, available at [www.whitehouse.org](http://www.whitehouse.org), accessed 26 Jan 2007.

<sup>111</sup> Neoconservatives are generally understood to hold a philosophy characterized by aggressive foreign policy and unilateralism. Two well-known examples are Senator Henry M. Jackson and Paul Wolfowitz.

<sup>112</sup> Gary Hart, 9.

<sup>113</sup> Kennedy, 4-5, (emphasis added).

It is unlikely that this move away from founding values has been intentional. Reflecting on changes in the world that brought America to its current strategic paradigm, Jablonsky illustrates the impact a changing international environment can have on a nation's perspective. He concludes that external influences fundamentally alter "the interplay of elements within the Clausewitzian trinity."<sup>114</sup> The Spread of communism and its resultant Cold War fundamentally altered the American trinity and produced the national security paradigm that exists to this day.

The underlying conditions of that paradigm ceased to exist late in 1989. The new world order that emerged established a new set of conditions similarly affecting the American trinity--necessarily requiring the development of a new strategic paradigm. Unfortunately, an appreciation of this reality did not occur in the post-Cold War era. Administrations trapped in a Cold War paradigm have failed to adapt, continuing the foundation of US policy and the national security paradigm for the twenty-first century and beyond.

It is a reality that in human endeavors actions speak louder than words, especially on the international stage. What speaks the loudest, though, is the purposeful connection of actions and words. The President's decision to publish the administration's redefined doctrine of preemption within the latest NSS is perhaps the greatest indicator that the NSS is straying farther away from, instead of closer to, a viable American grand strategy. America's self-proclaimed right to militarily attack a nation or set of actors that pose 'sufficient threat' is questionable within morality and international law, but to elevate

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<sup>114</sup> Jablonsky inaccurately represents the Clausewitzian trinity, according to noted Clausewitz expert Christopher Bassford, but nonetheless Jablonsky's view serves the purpose of illustrating a point within this thesis. For an excellent discussion of the Clausewitzian trinity see <http://www.clausewitz.com/CWZHOME/Trinity/TRININTR.htm> and Jablonsky, 6.

preemption in a preventative context as a grand strategy is, in Hart's words, "to seriously misunderstand the strategic enterprise."<sup>115</sup> Hart does temper though and provides "The current government's theological approach to security (axis of evil) [sic], does qualify as 'strategy' in the most prosaic sense of the word..."<sup>116</sup>

Additionally, a time element is associated with the applicability of current NSS practice. As strategy, the current products are only as valid as the administration that creates them. By design, the NSS reports are due to Congress on an annual basis, concurrent with budget submissions. Due to the cyclical nature of American politics, it could be argued this makes US strategic policy highly volatile. Additionally, Don Snider questions, "More specifically, should the executive attempt a new...strategy every year?"<sup>117</sup> Based on personal experience, Snider's answer is no. One of the great failings of recent administrations is that no President since 1986 has ever met the annual requirement for the National Security Strategy.<sup>118</sup> This is not an attempt to imply that good practice and good strategy are the defining hallmarks of grand strategy. On the contrary, strategy does not have to be good or effective to be grand strategy. As seen, it is the philosophical approach and aim that delineate grand strategy from other forms.

### **Is the NSS Just Propaganda?**

An important distinction must be considered when discussing the NSS as it relates to propaganda. The distinction is whether the NSC process and its product are propaganda by intent and/or practice.

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<sup>115</sup> Gary Hart, 11.

<sup>116</sup> Gary Hart, 13.

<sup>117</sup> Snider, 17.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 17-20.

Building on work presented in chapter three, the matter of intent can easily be addressed. The framers of legislation creating the NSC and NSS were influenced greatly by the era and the prevailing international environment. Anxiety about the credible physical threat and spread of communism posed a significant concern in both 1947 and 1986. Establishment and sustainment of American security was foremost on the minds of legislators during the entire period between 1947 and 1990. This overriding priority, in a domestic environment of limited resources and Congressional desire to exert more influence over the military, provides evidence that Congress was primarily concerned with establishing an institution and process that would ensure American security. Once again, given the strength of the words regarding reorganization of the military, it is hard to argue the case that establishing the NSC and requiring the NSS was anything more than a means to achieve increased Congressional oversight. Logically then, as a response to the greatest priority of their respective decades and an enabler to ensure the physical security of America through gained effectiveness in the military and Department of Defense, the NSS was clearly not propaganda by intent. The matter of NSS in practice, however, is an entirely different matter.

The most telling proof that the NSS has become another layer of bureaucratic propaganda, swallowing large amounts of brainpower with little practical output, is the fact that President Bush's 2001 NSS was still in development (the administration was grappling with creating strategy in the murky post-Cold War era) when two airliners smashed into the World Trade Centers in New York city and a third struck the Pentagon. This event initially provided a unifying threat, and galvanized public support for President Bush's newly spawned counterterrorism policies. Nearly a year later, in

September 2002, the administration finally published its NSS. Not surprisingly, it was shaped largely by the events of September eleventh. Nearly *18 months* after inauguration, and *12 months* after 9/11, the NSC and Congress rallied around the President as he declared “the war against terrorists with global reach” as the national security strategy of the United States. This effort, though undoubtedly worthwhile, showed a lack of appreciation for the critical enduring nature of the grand strategic endeavor.

As further evidence, drafters of President Clinton’s 1997 NSS made a concerted effort to tie national interests to resources. In the end, however, the effort was overshadowed by the catchy moniker the administration branded the document (and by definition their strategy) with, *Engagement and Enlargement*. The catch phrase was an attempt to emulate the Cold War’s strategy of containment and thus gain support. Expressed another way, President Clinton’s NSS was an attempt to spin propaganda not publish true grand strategy.

In perhaps the clearest expression of NSS as propaganda in practice, Don Snider assesses that articulating the US NSS, especially in 2006, is more about the message than the substance. Snider observes,

The NSS has served, and will continue to serve, five primary purposes...

- (1) Communicate strategic vision to Congress
- (2) Communicate this same vision to foreign constituencies
- (3) Communicate to selected domestic audiences, often political supporters
- (4) Communicate to internal constituencies to create internal consensus
- (5) Contribute to the President’s overall agenda<sup>119</sup>

Now, for better or worse, the NSS finds its greatest success as national and international propaganda.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Snider, 5-6.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSION

*“I have come to the conclusion that politics are too serious a matter to be left to the politicians.”*

Charles De Gaulle<sup>121</sup>

Through research and study it is apparent that presidents, politicians, strategy experts and doctrine regard the NSS as American grand strategy. The purpose of this paper has been to determine whether the NSS, in fact, conforms to the established criteria defining grand strategy.

In the first chapter the effort was made to establish a foundation of terminology that would provide continuity throughout the work. The terms national interest, elements of national power, grand strategy and national security were clarified and established to present a clear conceptual understanding. Subsequently, the study reviewed a short history of relevant Congressional actions that mandated publication of the NSS. This effort was conducted to explore the historical perspectives and determine whether grand strategy was in the mind of Congressional leaders. Finally, using the previous chapters as a foundation, the paper discussed the subjects of intent, pluralism and propaganda. Through this analysis, and by way of review, it was determined that, by definition and intent, the NSS is not grand strategy and treating it as such has negative implications for the US in the post-Cold War new world order.

By definition, the NSS is not grand strategy and even a cursory analysis of the most current National Security Strategies reveals a failure to demonstrate critical elements of grand strategy. Plainly stated, the US has core national interests implicit

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Charles De Gaulle, available from <http://www.quotationspage.com>, accessed 27 October 2006.

within the Constitution--national security is one of these interests, but not the only one. Additionally, from examining Congressional legislation and its intent, it is apparent that oversight and organization were the main goals of the NSA and GNA. Therefore, by deduction of all relevant criteria, the NSS is not grand strategy. The scope of the NSS was consciously limited to security, and the scope of a US national grand strategy would necessarily *not* be limited. A true grand strategy for the US would necessarily include all elements of power in pursuit of the preservation of all core national interests.

It is true, however, that security is one of the core national interests and a critical aspect of national policy. Additionally, national security should be an aim of any responsible government. The dilemma, as previously mentioned, is how to balance all the elements of national power across all core national interests to achieve the nation's aims; this is the essence of grand strategy. The thrust is that national security is the product of grand strategy and yet only one of the core national interests.

The framers of national security legislation were influenced by their time in history, the international environment and perceptions of the international order. These perceptions formed the foundation of a security paradigm that would last over 40 years. The trend has been the emphasis of one of the core national interests at the expense of others. The question that needs to be asked is, can these interests be treated in isolation? The answer is quite clearly no, not without sacrificing the other interests. Can the US afford to sacrifice these other interests? Absolutely not, therefore the challenge is to develop a US grand strategy that combines elements of national power to preserve all the core national interests. Such action would inevitably meet the requirements of Congress,

allow for government to more clearly focus efforts, and provide clear direction for the departments responsible and accountable for elements of national power.

In summary, the US political leadership has sustained a harmful imbalance of core national interests due to a legacy national security paradigm. The sustainment of this paradigm must cease for the US to forge a new era and proceed with the business of developing a true grand strategy for the twenty-first century. It was Liddell Hart who suggested, “The object in war is a better state of peace.”<sup>122</sup> A more relevant perspective for this and future generations is that the object in peace is a better state of peace; conduct everything with constant regard to the better peace you desire. Problematically, twenty-first century US strategists tend to be current event driven vice forward thinking, largely due to combined affects of media and public opinion. The inability to focus on the future has significant implications for relearning lessons of the past. Learning that a strategy is failing is only valuable if that knowledge is acted upon and ends are clearly communicated. Planning, decisions and strategy are necessary steps in the process but without action nothing can be accomplished. Decisive action is necessary; doing nothing is the worst option and indecision will lead to continued haphazard efforts.<sup>123</sup>

Quite simply, the evolving structure of the post-Cold War nation-state system has resulted in a corresponding change in the international political environment. The world has moved away from a predictable, polarized political landscape of the Cold War into a much more diffuse and fragmented order. Nations, sub-national groups and organizations are free to pursue independent interests among the community of nations. Concurrently, as a result of globalization, the world has become a complex,

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<sup>122</sup> ...hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire.” See B.H. Liddell Hart, 351.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 16-22.

interdependent network; actors within this network will ultimately become constrained as their interests become more common. The effect of this interdependence is that national power will become more diffuse, making the ability of one nation to influence any other nation more challenging.<sup>124</sup>

As Taylor and Snider explain, “With the global diffusion of power, national policy also becomes less fungible, less coercive, and less tangible...Soft forms of power, such as the ability to manipulate interdependencies, become more important...”<sup>125</sup> Their position is that viewing future global relationships through a Cold War perspective may not be an effective means to a successful end. They assert,

Now, after four decades of the Cold War and with no certain military threat, many feel that these (energy, health care, education, and deficits to name a few) [sic] are really issues of national security. The failure to invest in productive capacity, research, and development, and infrastructure; the crisis in American education; the exploding underclass; the pervasive drug culture; and other domestic problems may well have a greater direct impact on our future national security than any foreign military threat<sup>126</sup>

In essence, what they envision is the development of a true grand strategy that accounts for the core national interests. The future success of the US as the world’s only remaining superpower will depend on this paradigm shift and innovative measures (plus resources and will) designed to change the process and products of the US strategic institutions. If the US continues viewing its role through the sole lens of security, the nation will be marginalized by its own militant nature.

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<sup>124</sup> William J. Taylor and Don M Snider, “U.S. National Security Agenda and U.S. National Security Policy: Realities and Dilemmas,” *The Search for Security: A U.S. Grand Strategy for the Twenty-First Century*, Edited by Max G. Manwaring (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 107-109.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 109.

It was Senator Gary Hart in his book *The Fourth Power* who said, “War is not an instrument of policy; it is a failure of policy.”<sup>127</sup> Perhaps a more appropriate anecdote for the purpose of this paper would be: War is not an instrument of grand strategy; it is a failure of grand strategy. Though war may have a role to play in the American future, perhaps as much as it has in the past, it should not dissuade the leadership at the highest level of American government from using the wisdom of decades to prepare for a better future through the development of a true grand strategy. True grand strategy is not a means to get from one crisis to another but would serve as a beacon to navigate through crises and keep the nation on a steady course.

Americans are much clearer about the sheer fact of their power and less concerned about nurturing American core national interests. In the latter part of the twentieth century, and early part of the twenty-first, the United States’ unbalanced fascination with security and the ingrained national security paradigm has resulted in failure. Specifically, it is a failure to uphold the responsibility to establish and execute a grand strategy capable of preserving our core national interests and worthy of its founding fathers. Indeed, the United States National Security Strategy *is not* grand strategy and American core national interests are, and will continue to be, at risk.

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<sup>127</sup> Gary Hart, 162.

## APPENDIX A

*Moderation? It's mediocrity, fear, and confusion in disguise. It's the devil's dilemma. It's neither doing nor not doing. It's the wobbling compromise that makes no one happy. Moderation is for the bland, the apologetic, for the fence-sitters of the world afraid to take a stand. It's for those afraid to laugh or cry, for those afraid to live or die. Moderation...is lukewarm tea, the devil's own brew.*

Dan Millman<sup>128</sup>

The following is a short chronological characterization of how individual personalities have influenced the management of the National Security Council and the relationship between major US governmental departments (primarily Department of State and Department of Defense). By exception the source for this material is the National Security Council website at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).<sup>129</sup>

Initially, President Truman's NSC was dominated by the Department of State hoping to give institutional stability to national security policy-making and provide a major role in providing policy recommendations. Unfortunately, in addition to poor staffing and inconsistent meetings, the executive secretaries of the Council had no real influence beyond supervision of the staff process. As a result, in 1949, President Truman reorganized the NSC and directed the Secretary of the Treasury to attend all meetings and Congress amended the National Security Act of 1947 to eliminate the three service secretaries from Council membership.<sup>130</sup> The war in Korea dramatically changed the functioning of the NSC under President Truman. In large part it was due to the President's insistence, finally, that the NSC was to be the channel for national security recommendations. During the first year of the Korean War, the NSC came as close as it ever did under Truman to fulfilling the role as its authors' originally envisioned.

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<sup>128</sup> Dan Millman, available from <http://www.quotationspage.com>, accessed 27 October 2006.

<sup>129</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the history of the NSC and further explanation of each administration's idiosyncrasies and methods of NSC implementation see [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov).

<sup>130</sup> Additionally, the amendment added the Vice President and the Joint Chiefs as council members.

Unfortunately, this success was short-lived and the NSC effectiveness deteriorated in the last days of his Presidency.

Under President Eisenhower, the National Security Council system evolved into the principal arm of the President in formulating and executing foreign policy, defense and security affairs. Eisenhower created a structured system of integrated policy review which followed his preference for the military staff system. More than 40 interagency working groups were established with experts for various countries and subjects. His Special Assistant for National Security Affairs enacted a systematic bureaucracy of recommendations, decision, and implementation that became known as the ‘policy hill process.’ The NSC staff *coordinated* this complex system for ensuring the implementation of foreign policy and the top of this policy-making hill was the NSC itself, chaired by President Eisenhower. The Eisenhower NSC was heavily staffed by committees and was not intended to manage day-to-day foreign affairs or crises but was intentionally limited to policy review.

President Kennedy’s NSC construct was strongly influenced by the critique of the Eisenhower system and he initially looked to a strong Secretary of State to take charge of foreign affairs. Kennedy preferred to make policy utilizing ad-hoc groups, soon after taking office, in order to simplify the foreign policy process, he dismantled Eisenhower’s complex NSC system, intentionally blurring the lines between policy-making and operations. Additionally, President Kennedy appointed a Special Assistant for National Security Affairs and a National Security Adviser.<sup>131</sup> The former took on the primary coordination role of the NSC staff while the later met with Kennedy’s more informal

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<sup>131</sup> President Kennedy’s appointment of a National Security Advisor was the inception of this position which has remained from that time until the current day administration.

style and provided personal foreign policy advice. Eventually Kennedy's NSC evolved into what the international activities section of the foreign affairs community called 'a little State Department.' The hallmark of his NSC was the reliance upon ad-hoc inter-agency working groups functioning in a "crisis management" atmosphere.

President Johnson also relied heavily on the National Security Advisor and his staff, as well as preferred various ad-hoc groups and trusted friends. President Johnson tended to treat the NSC as a personal staff, and was disinclined to use the Council meetings for advice. Instead, he consulted regularly with what became known as his Tuesday lunch group. These informal luncheon meetings were much more to Johnson's liking and quickly gained a prominent place in the Presidential decision-making process. Initially including the Secretaries of State and Defense and the National Security Adviser, the group was eventually expanded to include the press secretary, the Director of Central Intelligence, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

President Nixon's National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, dominated the making of U.S. foreign policy during the Nixon Presidency. President Nixon's philosophy was to direct foreign policy from the White House and he regarded his selection of a National Security Adviser as especially critical. Henry Kissinger revised the National Security Council apparatus developing a conceptual framework that would guide foreign policy decisions and take advantage of his intellectual ability, ambition, and his close relationship with President Nixon. The development of this NSC system intentionally sought to combine the best features of the Johnson and Eisenhower systems. Kissinger moved quickly to establish the policy dominance of the NSC while marginalizing the Department of State and its Secretary. Typifying Kissinger's primacy

in foreign policy matters, on September 22, 1973, he also became Secretary of State. For the first and only time, one individual concurrently held both posts of Secretary of State and National Security Adviser.

President Ford was relatively inexperienced in foreign affairs, which made the decision to utilize Kissinger's expanded NSC staff and structured processes an easy one. President Ford's new National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft took seriously the NSC obligation to present the President with clear analyses and options for decision. He managed a toned-down version of the Kissinger NSC system that was compatible with the Secretary of State's role as the President's chief foreign policy adviser.

President Carter began his term of office determined to eliminate the perceived abuse of power that Kissinger accumulated as both the NSC Adviser and Secretary of State. He felt the role of the National Security Council should be one of coordination and research, and marginalized the advisor so the position would be only one of many players in the process. Initially, Carter reduced the NSC staff by one-half and decreased the number of standing NSC committees from eight to two. Carter's preference for informality and openness increased the diversity of views he received but complicated the decision-making process. For example, no agendas were prepared and no formal records were kept at his regular Friday breakfast meetings, sometimes resulting in differing interpretations of the decisions actually agreed upon. Another of the greatest weaknesses of his NSC system was President Carter's inability to discipline his advisers and forge a more coherent policy team.

In the Reagan administration a community approach to government decision-making was emphasized. The National Security Adviser was downgraded and subjugated

to a newly appointed Presidential Counselor. Additionally, the Chief of Staff to the President exercised a coordinating role in the White House. The collegiality among the powerful department heads was not successfully maintained and conflicts unfortunately became public as the NSC staff tended to emerge as a separate, contending entity. Under William Clark, as National Security Advisor, Reagan's National Security Decision Directive 2 assigned responsibility for developing, coordinating, and monitoring national security policy to the National Security Adviser in consultation with the NSC. This NSC system did not however, solve the departmental coordination problems. Among his six appointments to the position of National Security Adviser was General Colin Powell. General Powell directed an NSC that strived to provide balanced coordination of major foreign policy presentations for the President. Managing the Policy Review Group and the National Security Planning Group, Powell conducted an NSC process that was efficient but low key.

President George Bush (Sr.) made many changes in the NSC machinery and established the model that largely survives today. President Bush brought deep experience to the NSC leadership with his appointment of Brent Scowcroft as National Security Adviser. Scowcroft's management of the NSC was characterized by informality and a very close relationship with the President. Effectively, President Bush restored collegial relations among department heads. He reorganized the NSC to include a Principals Committee, Deputies Committee, and eight Policy Coordinating Committees. Bush's NSC played an effective role during such major developments as the unification of Germany and the deployment of American troops in Iraq and Panama.

On January 20, 1993, the day of his inauguration, President William J. Clinton issued Presidential Decision Directive 1 (PDD-1) to departments and agencies concerned with national security affairs. PDD 1 revised and renamed the framework governing the work of the National Security Council. The new membership of the National Security Council included the new position of Assistant to the President for Economic Policy. The intent of this position was to serve as a senior economic adviser to coordinate foreign and domestic economic policy through a newly-created National Economic Council (NEC). The NEC was to deal with foreign and domestic economic issues in much the same way as the NSC coordinated diplomatic and security issues. Clinton's NSC membership was expanded to include the Secretary of the Treasury and the U.S. Representative to the United Nations. Clinton's National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake was effective in developing an atmosphere of cooperation and collegiality. The National Security Council framework in the Clinton administration included an NSC Principals Committee and an NSC Deputies Committee, which effectively, in the mind of the President, allowed him to "protect our nation's security – our people, our territory, and our way of life."

Due to the fact that President George W. Bush is only halfway through his second term, not much is known, from a historical perspective, about the inner workings of his national security machinery.

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