

Ongoing Discussion “Thought Piece”

Prepared by

Sheila Ronis
sronis@walshcollege.edu

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Ongoing Discussion Host: Bill Bellows
William.bellows@pwr.utc.com

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“The Project on National Security Reform (PNSR): Vision Working Group Update”

Sheila R. Ronis, Ph.D.
PNSR Vision Working Group Leader
Director, MBA and MSSL Programs
Walsh College,
Troy, MI

Thank you for inviting me here today. I am honored to be able to give you an update on the project I am currently participating in, in Washington, D.C. for the Center for the Study of the Presidency headed by Ambassador David Abshire; the Project on National Security Reform or PNSR, as we call it, Congressionally mandated and federally funded through the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

“Ultimately, PNSR will produce recommendations on changes to the National Security Act of 1947 and its subsequent amendments, presidential directives to implement reforms, and new Congressional committee structures and practices.” The Project is strictly non-partisan.

Nearly two years ago, I was approached by the Honorable James R. Locher, III, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, to Chair the Vision Working Group on a new project that would draft the next National Security Act for Congress. Mr. Locher, earlier in his career, had the extraordinary opportunity to be the architect of the Goldwater Nichols Act, the legislation that brought “jointness” to the Pentagon in 1986. He now leads the entire effort with the involvement of over 12 working groups, The Executive and Legislative branches of the government, dozens of scholars, practitioners and policy analysts, foundations, industry and a myriad of think tanks, colleges and universities, including my own, Walsh College in Troy, Michigan.

The Project’s Guiding Coalition includes senior government and policy making officials and academics including notables such as Brent Scowcroft, Wesley Clark, Newt Gingrich, Thomas Pickering, Norm Augustine and Leon Fuerth. I was privileged to meet Mr. Locher in 1996 when he asked me to develop a vision of the future for the Department of Defense as part of the Defense Reform Initiative for Secretary William Cohen. But, my current involvement with the Project on National Security Reform is

especially exciting since the United States has an opportunity to address the many problems with our national security system evidenced by tragedies from 9-11 to Katrina.

A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of completing a study as a consultant to the U.S. House of Representatives Small Business Committee. I was asked, as a systems scientist, to look at a number of defense industrial base issues and their national security implications. I was astonished to find that the nation is not well prepared to plan for or establish policy or “grand” strategy in a holistic or long term sense and the national security implications to that remain very disturbing.

At the end of World War II, General George C. Marshall said, “We are now concerned with the peace of the entire world, and the peace can only be maintained by the strong.” But, how does the United States remain strong? What does that mean in a world of globalization? And, how do we even define what national security is in such a complex and interdependent world?

Systems scientists are not trained to look at parts of a puzzle. We’re trained to step out into the next larger system or the system beyond that to look across the entire mosaic at the elements and their interdependence and interactions to better understand the whole and its behavior. And, that is what the Vision Working Group is trying to do for the Project on National Security Reform. We are developing a vision of success for a new national security system for the country – well into the 21st Century. To do that, we are using visioning tools to develop guiding principles that will be used, with our colleagues, to create a new national security system and structure, along with the strategies and processes necessary for success.

I want to share some very preliminary findings developed by the leadership of the Vision Working Group as the Project takes shape. These findings will evolve as the Project moves into full execution over the next two months. It is our hope that this work will stimulate conversation, offer new thoughts, and help forge the way ahead.

Our nation’s security is rooted in the successful integration of all major elements of national power. When successfully combined, our vitality as a nation is ensured and our ability to encourage positive change throughout the globe is enhanced.

For decades, the U.S. national security apparatus, continuously modified yet originally designed in 1947 has been challenged to meet the demands of maintaining our nation’s security. Today, many believe the current structure and processes are insufficient to meet many of the nation’s new and more varied challenges. Sharing information internally and externally has proven to be critical, but is extremely difficult. Yet, our future success and security is dependent upon efficiently and effectively collaborating with a wide range of partners, both pre-identified and unanticipated. We must create an interagency that can quickly and seamlessly work with all elements of our government, as well as with U.S. allies, friends, partners, the private sector, non-government agencies, and others as the situation demands.

The Project on National Security Reform is proposing a modern apparatus to serve the nation’s needs well into the 21st Century to support the broad national security challenges

and objectives and address the interagency in the space between the President of the United States and the Cabinet level agencies and departments.

The Vision Working Group is engaged in developing a “Vision of Success” for the national security system in the 21st Century. That is, what is the basis for re-thinking the system and how will success in the future be characterized?

The environment of the 21st Century is and will continue to be characterized by rapid change and continuing uncertainty. Many factors contribute to a security landscape that differs greatly from the world we thought we envisioned at the end of the Cold War. Simply put, globalization has resulted in a world that is increasingly interconnected and inter-dependent. Readily available technology, environmental degradation, transnational terror, global disease, and a host of other concerns have added complexity to the national security landscape. This volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment will demand the application of a wide range of traditional and innovative strategies and tactics to counter threats and take advantage of opportunities.

The Vision Working Group began by looking at the values that should underlie the system. Values reflect the norms that guide cultural and organizational behavior. While their fundamental basis is enduring, refinements and expansions occur over time. Therefore, the values we propose should reflect what we will stand for as a nation and inform the development of the 21st century National Security System.

American values will guide the new National Security System of the 21st century:

- The United States Constitution and Bill of Rights
- “Rule of law” and principles of good governance
- Respect and tolerance for others
- Maintenance of an activist presence and capability throughout the world where our interests and opportunities lie
- Democratic principles of self-determination for all nations
- An educated citizenry at home
- And, competent and professional public servants capable of employing all instruments of national power.

Assumptions reflect that which we believe to be true, but which cannot necessarily be proven. Assumptions must be tested to determine validity. However, they support establishment of a richer context from which analysis can proceed. Over time, they will be refined to reflect new levels of understanding.

Based on the inherent complexities of the security environment, the Working Group begins with the following assumptions:

- Defense is a key, but not the only or even the primary component of National Security.
- U.S. military forces and Interagency partners will be expected to function well along the entire war-peace spectrum of contingencies and operations other than war.
- There will be many different venues for conflict from deep space to cyber

space, from urban areas to deep underground, and within the U.S. homeland as well as around the world.

- The information age will reduce the timelines to react or recover, create instant worldwide communications and attention, enable access to a wide range of information including advanced technologies.
- Fanatical adversaries from rogue states, terrorist groups and non-state actors will continue to attack the U.S. and its allies and friends in asymmetric ways using whatever is at their disposal from high technology information warfare, to weapons of mass destruction, to low technology tactics. Asymmetry will continue to be characterized as “that which cannot be anticipated.”
- Regardless of the type of conflict, the US will rarely be acting alone. Most of the time, we will be working in concert with additional partners to include:
 - Other government agencies (in an inter-agency mode),
 - Allies,
 - Coalitions,
 - Non-government organizations (ranging from humanitarian relief to global corporations),
 - International organizations (such as the Red Cross), and
 - Adhoc and *unanticipated* partners (such as ASPCA and Wal-Mart became during Katrina).
- The need to reform the US National Security system is not a result of this particular Administration or any other but the result of an accumulation of consequences over several decades.
- National Security includes both threats and opportunities.
- The multiplicity of threats and opportunities facing the vitality of America and its position in the global environment will require an expansive definition of the domain of National Security.
- The expansion of the definition of the domain of National Security to include more does not mean that the entire USG must treat everything equally.
- Prioritization of National Security issues will be the domain of each elected administration.
- The multiplicity of threats and opportunities leads to the conclusion that the National Security System for reasons of resource realities will require a panoply of permanent, semi-permanent, and ad-hoc entities to carry out policy implementation.
- Horizontal operational integration of the current National Security System is needed.
- Operational horizontal integration and the development of coherent cross-agency policy on specific issue sets is needed.
- The Congress will create the appropriate structures to provide oversight to any created permanent or semi-permanent entity in the Executive Branch.
- The distinction between domestic and foreign challenges is gone in today’s world.

Based upon both the realities we face today and the context emerging for tomorrow, three preliminary observations can be made. First, *the world is a system*, like a spider web. Movement or damage in one spot has the potential to be felt throughout the entire web.

While the ripples may be visible closest to where the stone is thrown, the entire pond feels some level of movement and/or impact. Global interdependence is now a reality. Second, *the US homeland is no longer protected by distance or time*. The great oceans that buffered us from much of the world no longer serve as boundaries. Therefore, the distinction between foreign affairs and homeland concerns has become blurred – perhaps even non-existent. National security is a merged mess of internal, external, and interdependency issues. Third, the reality of *globalization demands a holistic world view* along side of our specific national interests. Our individual “national interests” cannot be the only consideration of our nation’s security apparatus. The needs and concerns of the US must be developed in concert with the welfare and security of the entire globe. If the U.S. expects to shape the future of the world, the country cannot only view things from a US-centric viewpoint.

These observations may be revised or dismissed in the future, but they are providing a starting point for rethinking the National Security System. Moreover, these observations reflect a very different world than existed in 1947 when the current system was devised.

Security in the 21st century has taken on a far wider range of considerations, conditions, players, and situations. The more focused scope and relative “predictability” of the Cold War era is gone forever. The challenge is to determine how to incorporate these thoughts into how we rethink the National Security System.

Dozens of studies have attempted to gain a consensus of what should and should not be considered national security with limited success. National security is *potentially* anything that can affect our nation and it includes both *threats and opportunities*. Recognizing the challenge of such a broad approach, the Vision Group proposes development of a system that can prioritize among a myriad of concerns, rather than imposing pre-set qualifiers and contingency descriptions.

If “what is” and “what is not” in the arena of National Security is artificially or prematurely narrowed, it is likely that we will continue to misread situations that can ultimately, and negatively, affect the nation. Ten years ago the challenges related to foreign prostitution, diseased birds, infected bridegrooms, automobile emissions, and pilot training rosters were not typically the focus of national security. Today, it is clear that they might well have been. AIDS, Bird Flu, Tuberculosis, global climate change, and 9/11 terrorist preps are part of our daily security landscape. The point is that we cannot imagine or determine now with certainty what might affect us in the future.

The challenge is to develop a strategy, establish criteria, set priorities, and ensure continuous review. The Vision Working Group has developed a preliminary model to guide the establishment priorities for both national security threats and opportunities. Instead of establishing rigid criteria, the model features considerations that can guide analysis.

Threats can be assessed and prioritized based upon considerations such as

- Urgency,
- Impact,

- Magnitude,
- Mitigation options, and
- Intention

Opportunities can be assessed and prioritized based upon considerations such as

- Knowledge,
- Expertise,
- Probability of success,
- Resources,
- Long term sustainability,
- Proportionality, and
- Intention

Therefore, virtually *all* issues are within the scope or purview of national security. If we start by “assuming” everything warrants consideration, the likelihood of missing or misinterpreting conditions and challenges that may later prove to be critical is dramatically reduced.

The objective, therefore, is for the national security structure to set priorities and continuously refine them, rather than potentially exclude challenges prematurely.

Based on this approach, National Security can be considered:

Any situation, condition, or entity that has the potential to enhance or degrade the viability and vitality of the nation.

And,

*The National Security System is **responsible for and measured by:***

- *The viability and vitality of the nation,*
- *Peaceful and positive development throughout the countries of every region, and*
- *Cooperation and collaboration around the globe.*

Therefore, the National Security System must become a “learning organization” that can anticipate, adapt to, and successfully address the widest range of threats and opportunities for both the good of the nation and the world.

The future security system will need to possess certain inherent qualities that will be critical to success:

- Share information and collaborate horizontally,
- Accommodate unanticipated needs and partnerships,
- Ensure agility in the face of uncertainty,
- Operate within constrained timelines,
- Incorporate ad-hoc structures and processes, and
- Maintain a long-term view.

Scoping national security, proposing a scheme to set priorities, and establishing fundamental behaviors is merely a first step intended to guide and stimulate detailed analysis across the Working Groups. As the project moves into full execution, further analysis will lead to refinement of these preliminary findings.

Establishment of a full visioning effort is also underway. In addition to complementing and enhancing our findings, the visioning process has resulted in detailed scenarios against which specific options generated by the project are being assessed.

The Vision Working Group has developed eight alternative future national security scenarios designed to provide a range of perspectives on how the next several decades might unfold. The purpose of these scenarios is to assist in the hard work of creating PNSR policy recommendations that will stand the test of time. The scenarios were developed using a modified Delphi technique developed and described in my book, *Timelines into the Future*.

The National Security Act of 1947 has survived largely in tact for 60 years, despite major social, technological, economic, environmental, and political changes. These cumulative changes are a primary reason why the Project on National Security Reform is necessary.

Similarly, we will face extraordinary changes in the next 60 years. In fact, many futurists, forecasters, and technologists believe that the rate of change in the next decades will be faster than the decades preceding. It is with this in mind that we were asked to create a set of scenarios that would provoke discussion and debate within the Project and hopefully lead to better, more resilient policy recommendations.

As a caveat, these scenarios have been intentionally designed to stress the Working Group's recommendations from several angles. The scenarios should not be viewed as predictions of a probable future, but rather glimpses into plausible alternative futures. The scenarios are intentionally inconsistent and oft times bleak, all in the interest of provoking a wider range of conversation.

Each scenario is followed by specific discussion questions to ponder. Three general questions we are using when reading each scenario are:

1. How will the recommendations function in the scenario presented?
2. Are there problems or solutions identified that we have not addressed?
3. If this future is not desirable, what choices should we be making today to avoid it?

Finally, I would like to thank the National Academies for their help in eliciting the future insights of dozens of leading scientists and engineers for this effort. In addition, we received insights from forward-thinking contributors in other fields too numerous to mention.

The eight scenarios include:

3 in the 2020 timeframe
3 in the 2040 timeframe and
2 in the 2060 timeframe.

The 2020 scenarios include:

Scenario 1: Red Death, in which we meet a country struggling to get back on its feet after a major biological attack and witness a debate about the future role of the US government both at home and abroad.

Scenario 2: People's War in which the United States faces global asymmetric warfare against a nuclear-armed great power. The entire federal government is caught in the conundrum of how to respond to anonymous attacks at home and abroad while avoiding an escalation to nuclear war.

Scenario 3: A Grand Strategy in which we explore the utility of an integrated grand strategy development capability for smoothing the transition from one Presidential Administration to another.

The 2040 scenarios include:

Scenario 4: Army of One in which we explore the intersection of unmanned, robotic warfare and on the ground, assisted diplomacy. This scenario depends upon the continuation of current trends in robotics and sensors technology, as well as a public policy choice to enable greater real-time interaction between the military and diplomatic arms of the US government.

Scenario 5: Who Holds the High Ground in which we envision major competitive changes in the Earth-Moon system from the perspective of a traditional interagency space working group.

Scenario 6: A Brave New World in which we examine a plan to apply proven neuroscience, psychiatric, and medical techniques to the control of pathological behaviors in a world of readily accessible weapons of mass destruction.

The 2060 scenarios include:

Scenario 7: A Warm Reception in which we focus on the challenge of developing international consensus for action on the issue of global climate and the possibility of unintended consequences.

Scenario 8: It's a Small World in which we explore the implications of a very different future, wherein small, molecular scale machines (nanotechnology robots or "nanobots") have become ubiquitous.

Finally, we make a special note on the possibility of a technological singularity by 2060.

These scenarios will be used to test all the solution sets that are emerging from the Working Groups and to assist in the integration of the overall study. To learn more about our project and keep up to date with our progress, please visit our website at www.pnsr.org.

Biographical Information:

Sheila Ronis is Director of the MBA and Master of Science in Strategic Leadership Programs at Walsh College where she teaches the capstone of the MBA, Issues of Globalization in the Doctorate of Management and Strategic Visioning and Leadership in the Master of Science in Strategic Leadership programs. She is also President of The University Group, Inc., a management consulting firm, and think tank specializing in strategic management, visioning, national security and public policy. Her B.S. is in Physics and Mathematics. Her M.A. and Ph.D. are from The Ohio State University in Organizational and Social Systems Behavior.

Sheila came to Walsh having worked in industry and government at AT&T and The Department of Energy. Her clients have ranged from General Motors Corporation and Ford Motor Company to the U.S. Department of Defense, Congress and the State Council of the People's Republic of China.

Known as a systems strategist, Sheila has authored 172 papers and 2 books. She has been studying the national security implications of the economic element of national power for nearly 2 decades.

Her report to the Small Business Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives that asked her to take a systems scientist approach to the erosion of the industrial base was published in 2006 and she is now working as the leader of the Vision Working Group of the Project on National Security Reform under the direction of the Honorable James R. Locher, III.