

IAFF 290-13
Forward Engagement
Professor Leon Fuerth

Spring 2010 Scenario

By law, the President is required to submit a report to Congress on The National Security Strategy of the United States, due 150 days after inauguration (see Wikipedia). The purpose of this requirement is to force **each** new Administration to provide the Congress with an overview of how it defines the national security, and how it intends to provide for it. In theory, the report should serve as a basis for dialog between the Executive and the Congress.

In the real world, Administrations usually miss the legal deadline because the task of organizing an administration – even for a second term – is consuming, not to mention the multiple challenges that must be dealt with from day one. The Obama administration is no different from its predecessors, on this point. As of today (March 9, 2010), work on The National Security Strategy is still under way. This creates an opening for our scenario.

Members of the class are to consider themselves as a team that is preparing a draft of the Presidents Report on the National Security Strategy, under the direction of the National Security Adviser, who, in turn, is working under overall guidance from the President. Specifically, your group is working on a new chapter for the report, which is to reflect the President's particular interest in long-range planning.

As the scenario begins, you receive the following message from the National Security Adviser:

The President believes that many of the worst problems waiting for him after his inauguration could have been anticipated and acted upon much earlier, during the administrations of his predecessor, or even earlier. This explains, as you know, his particular interest in finding ways to develop foresight as a working component of the policy process. He now wishes to use his pending report to Congress, on the National Security Strategy of the United States, as a way to formally bring his views on this subject to the Congress and to the American people.

Accordingly, the President wants us to develop a chapter identifying major long-range challenges (whether threats or opportunities) that lie beyond the normal four-five year planning horizon of the government. You have already been looking at some of these with the help of four working groups. Your group will pick up where these efforts leave off. You will be identifying, at extreme range, what you consider to be major future contingencies, and you will be suggesting very early responses to these that are intended to begin an effort to shape them.

I want to emphasize that the President's overall definition of the scope of national security is much broader than physical defense (see attached definition adopted from the Project on National Security Reform).

The President wants to present these contingencies to Congress in a way that encourages the Congress to develop its own approach to systematic foresight. He hopes that, in this way, partisan differences will be tempered by deeper awareness of the underlying issues and of their complex inter-relationships. He therefore wants not only to identify major long-range contingencies, but to suggest early national responses that may have to be sustained and evolved well into the future, beyond the terms of many who are now serving.

This raises the question of how long-range national priorities can be translated into terms that fit within relatively short-term legislative horizons. The President is open to suggestions as to how this might be done.

Your draft chapter on Long Range Issues and Planning is due on Friday, April 30, 2010, when you presented it for discussion a special meeting of the National Security Council.

ON THE SCOPE OF NATIONAL SECURITY¹

National security is the capacity of the United States to define, defend, and advance its position in a world that is being continuously reshaped by turbulent forces of change.

The objectives of national security policy are:

- Security from aggression against the nation, by means of a national capacity to shape the strategic environment; to anticipate and prevent threats; to respond to attacks by defeating enemies; to recover from the effects of attack, and to sustain the costs of defense;
- Security against massive societal disruption as a result of natural forces, including pandemics, natural disasters and climate change;
- Security against the failure of major national infrastructure systems, by means of building robust systems, defending them, and maintaining the capacity for recovering from damage;

Success in national security matters depends on integrated planning and action, and on sustained stewardship of the foundations of national power: Sound economic policy, energy security, robust physical and human infrastructure, including health, and education systems, especially in the sciences and engineering. It also depends on the example the United States sets for the rest of the world through its actions at home and abroad.

¹ From “Forging a New Shield” Report by the Project on National Security Reform, September 2008.