



National Security Strategy Formulation

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Many Complaints About Recent Strategy Formulation Process

- Lack of clear priorities
- “Lowest common denominator” recommendations due to consensus development
- Lack of candor about decisions for fear of alienating some interest group
- Weak connections between strategy and resources
- Slowness in responding to changes in the national security environment
- A high staff burden

“Tyranny of consensus” and a “glossy coffee table brochure written primarily for outside audiences, including the press, allies and partners, defense industry, and the Hill.”

Michele Flournoy

“Most public documents, to include the National Security Strategy of the United States, are the vapid product of committees.”

Eliot Cohen

CSIS Study

Congressionally directed **independent study** on strategy formulation process

CSIS Study Process:

- Developed 6 case studies:

1. 1983 National Security Decision Directive 32 (NSDD 32)	4. 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance
2. 1993 Bottom Up Review (BUR)	5. 2008 French Defense White Paper
3. 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review	6. 2016 Australian Defense White Paper
- Reviewed the literature and analyzed four themes:

1. Process	3. Future Environment
2. Leadership	4. Competing Influences
- Surveyed the national security community – what documents were used and why?
- Analyzed previous processes and documents
- Interviewed former officials

CSIS study concept:

- Make recommendations useful for policy makers
- Focus on strategy formulation, not what the strategy should be

CSIS report: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/formulating-national-security-strategy>

Strategy Documents: Yesterday & Today

Pre-1993	No formal process, few documents
1993	Bottom Up Review, driven by end of Cold War links strategy to forces and acquisition programs
1994	BUR viewed as successful, Congress mandates “Quadrennial Defense Review”
1997	First QDR published
1998	Congress detaches strategy from resources
2001, 2006, 2010, 2014	QDRs published

Yesterday

- National Security Strategy
- National Defense Strategy
- National Military Strategy
- Quadrennial Defense Review/ Defense Strategy Review,
- National Defense Panel

Changes (FY 2017 NDAA)

NSS: Classified, to allow more candor

NMS: Focused more on strategy, classified

NDP: Report before DOD’s strategy document

QDR/DSR → National Defense Strategy (NDS):

- QDR eliminated, but strategy document still required
- To be done quickly
- Structured as SecDef guidance to DOD
- Increased prioritization
- Classified, with unclassified summary

No “Right” Process

Strategy formulation processes have multiple purposes:

- Identify future challenges and prioritize organizational goals
- Foster dialogue among senior leaders
- Align ends/ways/means; match resources to goals
- Communicate institutional direction to subordinate elements
- Build support internally
- Explain policy to multiple external audiences and build support

As a result, there is no “right” process. Every process involves tradeoffs and needs to be tailored to leadership, organization, and environment

Literature Review

Successful strategy formulation should consider four key areas:

1. Process – How Much Structure?

1950s/1960s: planning, aided by computers, a very structured, formal process with deliberate approaches to issues, but little flexibility or continued learning. 1970s: disillusionment with burden and lack of insight. 1990s: planning becomes more emergent, with innovation and quick responsiveness to events but less control and more room for inconsistencies.

2. Leadership – Balancing a Single Visionary and/or a Team Effort?

A single visionary leader can drive a centralized process; or leadership can be diffuse among a set of teams or top executives. Organizations can use either model, or a combination – so long as the decision is clear in initial stages.

3. Future Environment – Foreseeable or Unforeseeable?

Forecasting is attractive for budgeting, investment, and competitive analysis, but is impossible to get right every time. Experts recommend finding a balance between prediction and uncertainty by starting with broad ideas and moving flexibly and incrementally toward specific commitments.

4. Competing Influence – How To Incorporate Different Stakeholders?

Outside actors often have great sway over strategy formulation; their competing agendas can dilute effectiveness. Agendas are easier to align given a clear, dominant adversary/threat/issue. The literature recommends making conscious decisions about which ones to accommodate and which ones to disappoint.

Recommendations for Strategy Formulation Process Overall

1. Use the latitude arising from recent statutory changes to **adapt the process** and the structure to the needs of the senior leadership
2. Recognize the **inherently political nature** of the process
 - All strategies engender strong opposition
3. **Limit the proliferation of strategy documents** and ensure consistency of published documents.
 - Risk of cherry picking by issue advocates
 - Limit what secretary signs; establish clear document hierarchy
4. **Seize the opportunity** to drive change
 - Window open early in first term; latitude reduced over time

An effective strategy formulation process will help convince the Congress that DOD and the executive branch can develop strategy on their own

12 Strategy Formulation Choices

1. How rapidly to conduct the process?
2. How to align DOD strategy formulation with national security strategy formulation?
3. Who does the work: small v. large group? Insiders v. outsiders?
4. Who runs the process? What is the appropriate Civilian/Military balance?
5. What topics to cover: comprehensive coverage or focus on key issues? Clear priorities or many aspirational goals?
6. How to handle the relative importance of topics: clear priorities or many aspirational goals?
7. How far into the future to look?
8. What role for resources in formulating strategy?
9. What analysis should be done? How should risk be handled?
10. Should there be an outside review process before publication? Of what sort?
11. How much dissemination?
12. How often to conduct: on a regular schedule (e.g., every four years) or as circumstances change?

The 12 Choices (1 of 12): Rapidity of Process

New language (NDAA Section 941 (E)):
“[T]he Secretary shall present the national defense strategy required by this subsection as soon as possible ...”

Bottom Line: DOD has latitude on schedule
 – Sept probably the earliest possible date but could wait until Feb 2018

“Work will expand to fill the time available”

Historical Experience on Strategy Reviews		
QDR	Delivery (from beginning of administration)	Context
1993 (BUR)	Sept/Oct (9 months)	Administration change
1997	May (4 months)	2 nd term
2001	Sept (9 months)	Administration change
2006	Feb (13 months)	Statutory deadline
2010	Feb (13 months)	
2014	March (14 months)	
Foreign Experience		
France 2013	9 months	Administration change
UK 2015	6+ months	2 nd term; required
Australia	22+ months	Slowed by changes of administration

The 12 Choices (1 of 12): Rapidity of Process

Recommendation: ***DOD should publish its strategy document in the fall to support its budget proposals and give coherence to its policy actions.***

Analysis:

- QDRs delivered in Feb
- Budget cycle and global crises require strategy ASAP
- Sept 30 earliest achieved historically (1993, 2001)
- Lack of political appointees will slow process
- Staff burden a major complain of previous processes, reduced by early publication

The 12 Choices (2 of 12): Strategy Alignment – Document Sequencing

<i>Publication Dates of Strategic Documents</i>				
<i>Defense Strategy Reviews (BUR/QDRs)</i>	<i>National Defense Panels</i>	<i>National Security Strategy</i>	<i>Defense Strategy</i>	<i>National Military Strategy</i>
Sept/Oct 1993 (BUR)	[not required]	Jan, 1993 Feb 1996	Jan 1993	Jan 1992 Feb 1995
May 1997	[not required]	May 1997 Dec 2000		Feb 1995 Sept 1997
Sept 2001	[not required]	Sept 2002	March 2005	2004
Feb 2006	[not required]	Mar 2006	June 2008	
Feb 2010, Jan 2012, Defense Str. Guidance	July 2010	May 2010		Feb 2011
March 2014	July 2014	Feb 2015	Embedded in QDR	June 2015, Nov. 2016

- Historical experience is that the DOD strategy document is published first
- *NSS & NMS* much later in change of administrations, timing closer in 2nd terms
- *NDS* statutory text still requires “supporting most recent *NSS*”
- Even if no *NSS*, there is considerable “behind the scenes” dialogue

The 12 Choices (2 of 12): Strategy Alignment — Presidential guidance?

Was there formal, written presidential guidance on policy?	
QDR	Guidance?
1993 (BUR)	No
1997	No
2001	No
2006	No
2010	Yes (PSD 6)
2014	No (but based on DSG)
Foreign experience	
France	Yes
UK	Yes
Australia	Yes

- Bureaucracies naturally want upfront guidance
- Historical experience:
 - WH/NSC rarely provides direct written guidance
 - Some guidance provided through DCs and PCs
- NSC always hampered bureaucratically in getting a strategy out, lacks DOD’s continuity and depth of resources

The 12 Choices (2 of 12): Strategy Alignment and Agility

Recommendation: *DOD should not wait for White House guidance. Instead, it should drive an interagency conversation at the NSC, up-to and including the President, to establish key elements of the Administration's national security objectives.*

Analysis:

- Although NSS should come first in theory, in practice DOD strategy is always the first released
- DOD has the staff and expertise ready to move quickly
- Presidential guidance at beginning is ideal but rare
- QDR/NDS a forcing function on strategy development

Trump administration appears to be breaking this pattern, holding NDS until NSS published.

The 12 Choices (3 of 12): Team Structure and Composition

Who does the work? Small cell v. large group/many panels

Small cell:

- Responsive to Secretary
- Can be done quickly
- Examples:
 - **2001 QDR (initially, paper by ONA): failed, too general**
- Risk: Resistance by stakeholders to conclusions and implementation

Combinations:

- *1993 BUR* (partly Aspin's immediate staff; partly department-wide panels)
- *2012 DSG*
- *French White Paper*: 35-50 member commissions, public solicitation

Many panels:

- Involves all stakeholders
- Requires hierarchy of senior review panels
- Slow, highly criticized for staff burden
- Examples:
 - **1997, 2001 (ultimately, limited panels), 2006, 2010, 2014 QDRs: de facto DOD Standard Practice**
 - **UK SDSR: broad participation**
- Spawning of "QDR cells" creates further burden w/o much value.

The 12 Choices (3 of 12): Team Structure and Composition

Recommendation: *A small integration group, leveraging expertise and experience from across the broader organization, best enables a process to be focused on key issues while ensuring adequate connection to the institution's technical and analytic expertise. Some "red teaming" might broaden options and identify logical weaknesses.*

Analysis:

- Most DOD strategy processes have used bottom up panel structure
- Widespread creation of "QDR cells"; Large structure criticized for creating a excessive staff burden
- 2012 DSG was smaller and more leader driver
- DOD reviews are all "insider" efforts. Internal "Red teaming" was used in 2010 (JFCOM led effort)
- Decisionmaking and report writing cannot be separated

The 12 Choices (4 of 12): Process Leadership

Secretary clearly in charge by statute

NDS structured as SecDef guidance to the department:

- “[T]he Secretary of Defense shall provide to the Secretaries of the military departments, the Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces, the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands, and the heads of all Defense Agencies and Field Activities of the Department of Defense ..., and to the congressional defense committees, a defense strategy.”
- Different from QDR:
 - “[D]etermining and expressing the defense strategy of the United States.” 10 USC 118, now repealed

2017 NDAA language amended 10 USC 113:

- “The Secretary shall seek the military advice and assistance of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in preparing each national defense strategy required by this subsection.”
- Reciprocal requirement for Chairman:
 - “[A]dvising the Secretary on the production of the national defense strategy.”

There remains a continuing requirement for CJCS risk assessment and other documents but **outside** of the enumerated NDS process.

The 12 Choices (4 of 12): Process Leadership

Recommendation: *The secretary clearly runs the process in statute. The Secretary should drive the process in practice as well. The process needs to incorporate the CJCS and Joint Staff at every level in order to narrow gaps and limit end-game issues.*

Analysis:

- New statutory language structures strategy document as guidance from secretary to department.
- Secretary needs to lead if process is to be effective.
- **HOWEVER** — CJCS has separate authorities and responsibilities. Executing these can compete with OSD's strategy process.
 - Linkage at all levels reduces, but does not eliminate, possibility of end-game issues
 - Personality dependent
 - CJCS must support strategy if it is to be politically viable; others need only accept

The 12 Choices (5 of 12): Topics Addressed

Recommendation: *DOD should use its new latitude and focus only on the issues it thinks are most important.*

Analysis:

- Congress eliminated QDR's 26+ statutorily-required elements for the QDR and substituted six general areas
- Clear congressional desire for focus in the NDS
- Issue advocates want recognition for their topic, but expansion of topics dissipates impact
- Focusing on Secretary's priorities facilitates his engagement

The 12 Choices (6 of 12): Articulation of Priorities

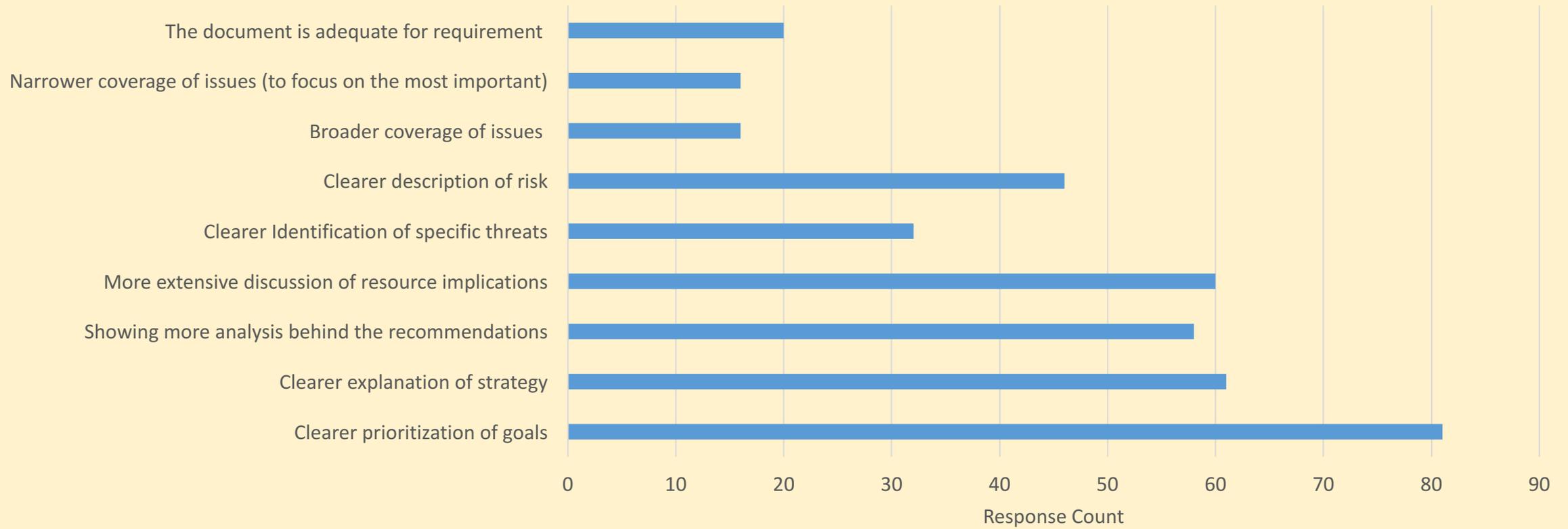
Clear congressional guidance for priorities:

- FY 2017 NDAA: “...[include] **priority missions**...the Department will **prioritize** among the threats...the Department will allocate and mitigate the resulting risks...”
- Conference report and hearing testimony also clear about need for greater candor — that’s why report is classified

The 12 Choices (6 of 12): Articulation of Priorities

CSIS Survey of National Security Community Shows a Desire For Specifics

Recognizing that no document is perfect, please indicate how DOD's strategy review report (QDR/NDS) might be more useful. Please check up to three boxes.



The 12 Choices (6 of 12): Articulation of Priorities

Recommendation: *The classified strategy documents should enumerate clear national security priorities, including descriptions and justifications about what missions and capabilities are more important than others.*

Analysis:

- Tradeoffs are a core element of strategy but politically challenging to articulate
- Recent strategies criticized for giving “lowest common denominator” advice
- Congress urges prioritization
- 1993 BUR and 2012 DSG had priorities; both considered successful
- In receiving documents with prioritized missions, Congress needs to provide incentives for DOD and the executive branch to continue these efforts
- Classification not the shield congressional language implies — leaks occur

The 12 Choices (7 of 12): Forecasting How far into the future to look?

Further into the future is theoretically attractive, but DOD’s track record in making accurate forecasts is abysmal.

Examples of forecasting horizons	
OMB/congressional fiscal horizon	10 years
Future Year Defense Program	5 years
Defense Strategy Review (successor to QDR but never implemented)	5, 10, and 15 year forecasts
NIC Global Trends	20 years
France	15 years
Australia	20 years

Brexit! 2016 election! – Considerable skepticism surrounds accurate forecasting

Richard Danzig’s caution: *“The U.S. military relies on prediction to forecast needs and influence the design of major equipment. As the future or futures are envisioned, requirements are deduced and acquisition and design decisions are made and justified accordingly. However, both the experience of the Department of Defense (DOD) and social science literature demonstrate that long-term predictions are consistently mistaken.”*

— *Driving in the Dark*, CNAS, 2011

The 12 Choices (7 of 12): Forecasting

Recommendation: ***Recognize the inherent uncertainty, develop of off-ramps, and focus on elements that would change decisions within the fiscal planning horizon (FYDP)***

Analysis:

- DOD needs forecasts for acquisition and force planning
- Envisioning the future is intellectually exciting but can absorb a lot of time
- DOD (and most institutions) have a poor track record in long range forecasting
- Forecasts that don't affect decisions in FYDP are of limited use
- Wargames, exercises, or scenarios can help, but humility is needed

The 12 Choices (8 of 12): The Role of Resources

- *QDR* prohibition on considering resource constraints gone, but *DSR* statutory explicitness about resource tradeoffs also gone
- Nevertheless, the new *NDS* language requires the development of a strategic framework that identifies and mitigates risk as well as identifying resource investments in “*defense capabilities, force structure, force readiness, force posture, and technological innovation*”
- **CSIS Observations:**
 - Strategy must be paramount, but...
 - Strategy w/o resource and program implementation will change rhetoric, not behavior

The 12 Choices (8 of 12): The Role of Resources

Recommendation: *Strategy formulation is always conducted in an environment of constrained resources. “Strategy driven, resource informed” is conceptually a good compromise.*

Analysis:

- Perennial tension between strategy and resources. Mismatch between strategy and resources undermines credibility and creates risk
- OMB fiscal guidance at beginning of process unavoidable
- Resource discussion enhances credibility
- Key secretarial decision: whether to ask for more resources

The 12 Choices (9 of 12): Supporting Analysis and Characterization of Risk: What analysis was referenced? – Historical Experience

Review	Analysis Cited in Report Text	Scenarios Cited in Report Text
1993	Campaign models, extensive and specific results	Iraq, Korea
1997	Extensive discussion: overseas presence, OPTEMPO, major wars, service analyses	Scenarios: Korea, SW Asia;, “Three alternative defense postures...including overseas presence, smaller scale contingencies, major theater wars, and conflict with a future power”, no specifics on postures
2001	Forces “assessed across several combinations of scenarios” at “moderate risk”, w/o further details	Defend US, deter aggression, win 2 MTWs (1 defeat, 1 regime change), small scale contingencies; not based on a specific threat
2006	“operational availability analysis” (4-yr ongoing analytic effort), op experience, no specifics	“major combat operations, routine deployments and a long war” w/o specifics
2010	“draws on quantitative analysis, expert opinions”, no specifics	3 scenario combinations, described in detail but without countries named
2014	[None cited]	No specific scenarios; missions instead: CT, homeland security, deterrence in multiple regions, combat operations (1 defeat/1 deny objectives)
France	[None cited]	No specific scenarios; missions under several strategic functions: knowledge and anticipation, deterrence, protection, prevention, intervention.
UK 1998	2 sets of simultaneity demands w/ specifics	50 tasks, w/forces specified
UK 2015	“tested and discussed with experts”	
Australia	[Findings Forthcoming]	Regions only: “Pacific”, “Indian Ocean”, “across the world”

The 12 Choices (9 of 12): Supporting Analysis and Characterization of Risk

Historical Experience on Explaining Risk	
1993 (BUR)	Forces: warfighting success Modernization: combat effectiveness, tech risk, cost, industrial base
1997	2 elements: Near-term deterrence & warfighting; Long-term transformation
2001	4 categories: Force Management, Operational, Future Challenges, Institutional, w/o metrics
2006	[same as 2001]
2010	[same as 2001, but classified annex offers additional detail]
2014	“Less margin for error”, “increased level of risk for some missions,” w/o elaboration; “Strains ability to simultaneously respond to more than one major contingency at a time” w/o elaboration In CPA, effect of sequestration: “[L]onger wars...higher casualties. Ultimately, emboldened adversaries and undermining confidence of allies.”

- Public documents offer vague and qualitative risk assessments.
- Chairman’s Risk Assessment expresses operational risk in more explicit terms.
- In the future, classified document may allow greater detail and candor.

The 12 Choices (9 of 12): Supporting Analysis and Characterization of Risk

Recommendation: ***Strategy documents should present analysis and discuss risks to increase the credibility of the findings and policies recommended.***

Analysis:

- All QDRs had extensive analysis behind them, BUT
- Past unclassified documents discussed analysis and risk in vague terms, if at all
- The *1993 BUR* created high expectations that subsequent documents have not met
- Lack of discussion about analysis and risk can reflect disagreement of key assumptions and results
- Lack of discussion of analysis can undercut the credibility of results
 - Current force planning is perceived to suffer from the “tyranny of consensus”
- Classified strategy documents allow more explicit discussion
- Executive branch concerned about Congress re-running analysis with different assumptions or criticizing acceptance of any risk, esp. to homeland. Will not release war plans to Congress

The 12 Choices (10 of 12): Outside Advisors

U.S. Experience

- Past DOD reviews were all “insider” efforts.
- No statutory impediment to involvement of outsiders, formally or informally
 - May require clearances, FACA compliance
- Historically, DOD has vetted elements of final report with key outsiders informally, but never formally
 - Informal round tables for outside experts
 - Informal discussions with Congress
- Internal “Red teaming” was used in 2010 (JFCOM led effort)
- *2001 QDR*:
 - Panels of outsiders fail, not enough time (~ 6 weeks)
 - Inability to make tradeoffs and move beyond advocacy

Foreign Experience

- UK has “senior review panel” like US *NDP* but as formal part of process.
 - Pro: Provides different perspectives; brings potential critics into process
 - Con: Risks leaks, last minute changes
- UK: Public outreach through websites
- France:
 - Includes both insiders and outsiders on commission
- Australia: Public and expert groups consulted explicitly

The 12 Choices (10 of 12): Outside Review – National Commission

Commission has replaced the National Defense Panel of previous strategy cycles; significant differences from NDP

	<i>NDP</i>	<i>“Commission on the National Defense Strategy for the U.S.”</i>
Membership	Commissioners appointed by Congress; Chairman/ Vice appointed by SecDef	All members appointed by Congress; stresses independence
Due	Final: March, following QDR delivery Goal: Commentary on QDR	Interim: June (to Congress) Final: December (to President and Congress) Goal: Input to strategic review
Tasks	Similar requirements: estimates of security environment, missions, and threats, w/ recommendations about readiness and structure of forces and assessment of risk and resources	
	Permanent requirement	One time only in 2017

NDAA requirements: *“COOPERATION.—[T]he Commission shall receive the full and timely cooperation of the Secretary of Defense in providing the Commission with analysis, briefings, and other information necessary for the fulfillment of its responsibilities. (2) LIAISON.—The Secretary shall designate at least one officer or employee...to serve as a liaison...”* Funding: \$5 million

The 12 Choices (10 of 12): Outside Advisors

Recommendation: *A final consultation with experts is a useful mechanism, and some consultation should be made in every strategy formulation process. As a trial initiative, DOD should consider using the National Commission or task force of DPB to review the final draft. Some “red teaming” might be useful to expand the scope of options and possibilities.*

Analysis:

- Past DOD reviews all “insider” efforts. Internal “Red teaming” was used in 2010 (JFCOM led effort)
- Outside reviews identify weaknesses in justification and mitigate possible criticism from outside experts
- Informal final review by outside experts has been common
- More formal reviews possible. Used in UK and France
- Outside advisory groups would need to meet FACA requirements
- The “National Commission” (successor to NDP) now structured to provide advice during formulation process, not commentary afterwards; could provide outside review. So could elements of Defense Policy Board that have broad DOD experience

The 12 Choices (11 of 12): How much dissemination?

- NDAA: *“Each national defense strategy under this subsection shall be presented to the congressional defense committees in classified form with an unclassified summary”*
- Previous language gone — *“communicating such national defense strategy to Congress, relevant United States Government agencies, allies and international partners, and the private sector”*
- **BUT** every strategy review we have looked at so far has had an extensive public document to explain the decisions and strategy to a broader audience — allies, public, industry
 - This will be especially important with vital allies and partners
- Legislation does not prevent department from using the unclassified summary as an “executive summary” and then writing a full monograph

Length of Public Document	
	Length (pages)
1993 (BUR)	109
1997	69
2001	71
2006	92
2010	105
2014	64
Foreign experience	
France	160 (2013)
UK	96 (2015)
Australia	188 (2016)
Germany	144 (2016)

85 p.
Avg.

The 12 Choices (11 of 12): Strategy Dissemination

Recommendation: *The classified strategy document should be distributed widely within the department to ensure that subordinate elements align their efforts with the strategy, in addition to being delivered to the appropriate committees of Congress. DOD should also develop an unclassified document for public release.*

Analysis:

- Classified NMS intended mainly to guide department.
- Increased classification of all strategy documents narrows audiences.
- Some unclassified document, beyond just a summary, necessary for public, allies, and adversaries
- Public document can be broader, more “aspirational”, and less candid about priorities.
- But public document cannot get too far away from the classified, leaks will highlight any differences.

The 12 Choices (12 of 12): Process Regularity

Recommendation: ***Administrations should conduct a strategy formulation process at the beginning of the first term but conduct further processes only when strategic conditions have changed to the degree that the old strategy needs major revisions.***

Analysis:

- Experience of 2014 QDR: required schedule misses opportunity
- Literature emphasizes strategy formulation “when needed” v. on a set schedule.
- Strategy development at beginning of new administration unavoidable. Desire to implement commitments from campaign.

Strategy Workforce

Demand signals: 1989 Galvin article & Skelton Panel, 2010 HASC Professional Military Education Study

Supply by Service

- Army: Designations, FA 59 & CP 60; Basic Strategic Art Program (BSAP), Army War College (AWC)
- Navy: Subspecialty 2300 or 2301; Naval War College (NWC); Naval Postgraduate School
- Marine Corps: Additional Military Occupational Specialty (AMOS) 05XX (PhD); School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW)
- Air Force: No specific designation; School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS)

Recommendations

1. Establish a formal joint forum for DOD, Joint Staff, and Service representatives to share best practices on strategist accession, career management, and retention
2. Leverage commercial sector efforts to cultivate strategic leadership (Chief Strategy Officer - CSO), strategic thinking, and strategic planning
3. Review the Army's Career Program 60 as a potential Dept-wide framework for DOD Civilian strategists

Recommended Congressional Action

Recommendation: ***Do not further restructure an already restructured system. Instead, DOD and Congress should see how the new system performs.***

Direct DOD and independent studies in FY 2018 NDAA after current strategy documents completed.

Congress should not punish DOD for doing what it asked.

- Debate and criticism inevitable
- BUT, attacks and punishment will drive DOD to vague, bland documents in future

Q: Does Congress care enough about strategy to direct further reforms, perhaps in as much detail as the acquisition system, if it is not satisfied?