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## The Commission on National Security/21st Century: A Hart-Rudman Commission Primer

by Charles Lathrop and Mackenzie M. Eaglen

The Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century (USCNS/21)—more commonly known as the Hart-Rudman Commission after its two coauthors, former Senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman—was created in 1998 to provide a comprehensive review of national security in the emerging new era.<sup>1</sup> Originally chartered by the Secretary of Defense, the commission has enjoyed the support of both the White House and Congress. The USCNS/21 was chartered as a Federal Advisory Committee to conduct what it calls “the most comprehensive review of American security since the National Security Act of 1947.”<sup>2</sup> With the completion of three reports, the last released earlier this year, the esteemed group has provided recommendations for a security strategy and proposed plan of implementation for America’s entry into the new century.

The first report, *New World Coming: American Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,<sup>3</sup> focused on the emerging global security environment for the first 25 years of the new century. The second, *Seeking a National Strategy: A Concert for Preserving Security and Promoting Freedom*,<sup>4</sup> outlines a new national security strategy that reflects emerging challenges. The third and final report, *Roadmap for National Security: Imperative for Change*,<sup>5</sup> offers a prescription for a significant overhaul of the structures and processes of U.S. national security.

### Phase I Report

#### *New World Coming: American Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

According to the commission’s first report, the world of the future is one of a rapidly expanding middle class, global political cooperation and regional integration. With this globalization also comes increased risk. Strong and robust American leadership will still be required for the coming age.

The commission bases its conclusions on twelve basic assumptions:

1. An economically sound United States will likely remain a primary national goal, with international implications, through 2025.
2. America’s social and political stability will help shape foreign policy goals and capacities.
3. Science and technology will advance and become more globally available, but with uneven benefits.
4. World energy supplies will remain based primarily on fossil fuels.
5. Disparities in income will increase along with the persistence of widespread poverty in much of the world.
6. The international aspects of business and commerce will continue to expand.
7. Nongovernmental organizations will grow in importance, numbers and international prestige.

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8. The United States will find it in its national interest to work with a variety of international organizations.
9. The United States will remain the principle military power in the world.
10. Weapons of mass destruction and disruption will continue to proliferate to a wider range of state and nonstate actors. Therefore, a robust nuclear capability remains essential for the United States.
11. Conflicts in which adversaries resort to forms and levels of violence shocking to our sensibilities should be expected.
12. Allies will continuously be relied on to confront complex new threats; however, reliable alliances will be more difficult to establish and sustain.

The commission concludes with the following presumptions:

- America will become increasingly vulnerable to hostile attack on our homeland.
- Rapid advances in information and biotechnologies will create new security vulnerabilities.
- New technologies will divide the world as well as draw it together.
- Advanced states' national security will be affected by the evolving global economic infrastructure.
- Energy will continue to have major strategic significance.
- All borders will become more porous.
- Sovereignty of states will endure, even under pressure.
- Fragmentation or failure of states will occur, with regional destabilizing effects.
- Foreign crises will be replete with atrocities and terrorizing of civilian populations.
- Space will become a critical military environment.
- The essence of war will remain unchanged.
- U.S. intelligence agencies will face more challenging adversaries.
- The United States will be asked frequently to intervene militarily in a time of uncertain alliances and with the possibility of fewer forward-deployed forces.
- The emerging security environment through 2025 will require different military and other national capabilities.

The report concludes that in light of these observations of the likely future global security environment, deterrence may have to be redefined. Given that conflict is likely to increase, the United States will need precise and clear objectives and a coherent strategy to succeed and sustain its national power.

## **Phase II Report**

### ***Seeking a National Strategy:***

#### ***A Concert for Preserving Security and Promoting Freedom***

The commission's second report offers an original framework for a new national security strategy. The first report pointed out two contradictory trends likely to continue into the future—the integration of the global “community” vs. the transformation of human society by forces of political and social division—both within a condensed period of time. In this challenging future environment, the promotion and expansion of American values will be increasingly important for the advancement of U.S. interests. Reflective of this, U.S. strategy must also work to lessen the disparities or potential causes of instability worldwide.

As a framework for a new strategy, the commission suggests that national interests can be divided into three categories: survival, critical and significant. Survival interests are vital to national security, homeland defense and the assurance and preservation of the American way of life. Critical interests include the promotion and security of key international systems on which Americans depend. Finally, significant interests are those which promote American national interests abroad, to include the rule of law and economic expansion.

In light of this, the commission offers guidance for the formulation of a national strategy:

1. Strategy and policy must directly reflect national interests.
2. A long-term view and commitment to America's strength must be taken.
3. The United States is at a crossroads, with unprecedented opportunities and challenges ahead which must be remembered for the new era.
4. The United States must utilize allies and other like-minded nations to assist in achieving security objectives.
5. Setting national goals is important and is inextricably linked with their rank-order priority.
6. To retain superpower status, the United States must apply its values and principles consistently throughout the world.

The commission further recommends several important priority objectives and fundamental policy aims for the United States at the turn of the century:

- Defend the United States and ensure that it is safe from the dangers of a new era.
- Maintain America's social cohesion, economic competitiveness, technological ingenuity and military strength.
- Assist the integration of key major powers, especially China, Russia and India, into the mainstream of the emerging international system.
- Promote, with others, the dynamism of the new global economy and improve the effectiveness of international institutions and international law.
- Adapt U.S. alliances and other regional mechanisms to a new era in which America's partners seek greater autonomy and responsibility.
- Help the international community tame the disintegrative forces spawned by an era of change.

The board concludes with the national security implications of the recommended strategy. It states that former methods and theories for dividing the world are becoming obsolete in a globalized international community while the economic dimensions of statecraft, along with technology, have increased in importance. It is suggested that the United States military will need five capabilities to remain dominant within the new environment: offensive nuclear capabilities, homeland security, conventional forces, expeditionary/intervention capabilities, and humanitarian and constabulary forces. The recommended strategy is intended to produce a better yardstick for measuring the capabilities necessary for the complex contingencies the military is likely to face. Finally, these suggestions recognize that the future U.S. military, like the current one, will exist primarily to deter major conflict, preclude crises and rapidly win wars when needed.

### **Phase III Report**

#### ***Roadmap for National Security: Imperative for Change***

In the final report, the commissioners reckon, "significant changes must be made in the structures and processes of the U.S. national security apparatus."<sup>6</sup> They decry the decline of the institutional base and warn that this turn of events threatens America's global influence and leadership.

To combat this debility, the commission recommends the following changes in five key organizational areas:

- ensuring the security of the American homeland;
- recapitalizing America's strengths in science and education;
- redesigning key institutions of the Executive Branch;
- overhauling the U.S. government personnel system;
- reorganizing Congress' role in national security affairs.

To fulfill these changes, the commission offers a series of concrete proposals. For the first of the five categories—homeland security—the commission suggests the creation of a new and independent National Homeland Security Agency (with a Cabinet-level director) to coordinate and integrate various U.S. government activities concerned with homeland security, such as the Coast Guard, Customs Service and Border Patrol. Next, they urge the creation of a new office of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Security to coordinate Department of Defense (DoD) homeland security activities. In addition, the commission states that homeland security should be accorded a new priority within the armed services, and in particular that the National Guard be given homeland security as its primary mission along with the organization, training and equipment needed. To reflect these changes, it is further recommended that Congress reorganize itself accordingly, including creation of a special select committee on homeland security.

To fulfill the second major change—recapitalizing America’s strengths in science and education—the commission offers several solutions. These include doubling the federal research and development budget by 2010, elevating the role of the President’s Science Advisor, and establishing a new National Security Science and Technology Education Act.

The third modification, institutional redesign, is intended to ensure that “strategy once again drives the implementation of U.S. national security policies.”<sup>7</sup> To achieve this, the President should be personally involved in a top-down strategic planning process linked to resource allocation within the government. Further, the National Security Advisor and National Security Council (NSC) staff should resume roles as coordinators of national security policy rather than acting as policymakers. Other recommendations include:

- making the Secretary of the Treasury a member of the NSC;
- abolishing the National Economic Council;
- creating within the State Department five regional Under Secretaries for Africa, Asia, Europe, Inter-America, and Near East/South Asia;
- integrating the activities of the U.S. Agency for International Development within the reorganized State Department;
- reducing staffs of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the military services and the regional unified commands;
- establishing a ten-year goal of reducing DoD infrastructure costs by 20–25 percent;
- moving the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to the second year of a presidential term;
- introducing a second change in the QDR with a novel process requiring the services and defense agencies to compete for the allocation of some resources within the overall defense budget to help prioritize funding for programs;
- reforming the acquisition process, including the use of two-year defense budgeting and a “fast-track” acquisition for breakthrough systems;
- shifting from a threat-based force-sizing process to a requirements-based process that measures recent operational trends, intelligence estimates of potential adversaries’ capabilities, and national security objectives as outlined when the new national security strategy is formulated;
- making improvement and development of expeditionary capabilities DoD’s highest priority;
- establishing an Interagency Working Group on Space;
- emphasizing the recruitment of human intelligence (HUMINT) assets.

The next suggested area for reform is within the government’s personnel system. A cumbersome and outdated personnel system and inadequate compensation have contributed to a crisis in recruitment and retention throughout the government. Recommendations for reform include launching a national campaign to reinvigorate and enhance the prestige of service to the nation, streamlining the process of attracting senior government officials, expanding the National Security Education Act of 1991, improving the Foreign Service system to include revamping the examination process, and streamlining Civil Service recruiting.

The commission also suggests the establishment of a National Security Service Corps (NSSC), an interagency mechanism to provide qualified personnel to all pertinent agencies, to include Defense, State, Treasury, Justice and the new National Homeland Security Agency. A complete overhaul of legislation governing military personnel (both officer and enlisted) is also suggested to reflect the impending reform and transformation of the military services.

Finally, the commission examines Congress' role in the formulation and execution of security policy. It is suggested Congress reconsider its role in national security policy via a review of the Legislative Branch's security policy function. The review would be conducted in both the House and Senate and should be unequivocally bipartisan. Following this assessment, the leadership of Congress and the Executive Branch would build programs to encourage members to gain knowledge and experience in national security matters. This would in turn be followed by structural reforms, such as merging appropriations and authorizing subcommittees to make the legislative process more efficient. Recognizing the need for greater cooperation between the Executive and Legislative branches, the review would establish instruments to improve consultation between them.

The capstone recommendation provided by the Commission would require the President and congressional leadership to institute a mechanism, to be determined jointly, to oversee the enactment of the changes suggested by the panel. This reflects the sense of the commissioners that, in the absence of some duly authorized central device, the recommendations run the risk of haphazard implementation at best.

## **Conclusion**

Taken as a whole, the three reports of the Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century have arguably accomplished the purpose for which they were intended, which was to provide "the most comprehensive review of American security since the National Security Act of 1947."<sup>8</sup> With the publication of the final report, the commission has laid the groundwork with suggestions and guidelines for creating a new national security framework to assist the nation and its leadership out of the post-Cold War era strategic way of thinking and into the new century. The true usefulness and impact of the commission's work remains to be seen, as the new administration undertakes formulation of various defense reviews and strategies in the upcoming months.

## Endnotes

1. The Commissioners: **Anne Armstrong**, Regent, Texas A&M University System, and Trustee and Chairman of the Executive Committee, Center for Strategic and International Studies; **Norman R. Augustine**, former Chairman and CEO, Lockheed Martin; **John Dancy**, former NBC White House and diplomatic correspondent; **John R. Galvin**, General, USA Retired, former NATO commander; **Leslie H. Gelb**, President, Council on Foreign Relations; **Newt Gingrich**, former Speaker of the House and Representative from Georgia; **Lee H. Hamilton**, Representative from Indiana and Director, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; **Lionel H. Olmer**, former Under Secretary of Commerce; **Donald B. Rice**, President and CEO, UroGenesys, Inc.; **James Schlesinger**, former Secretary of Defense, former Secretary of Energy and former Director, Central Intelligence Agency; **Harry D. Train**, Admiral, USN Retired, former Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic; **Andrew Young**, former mayor of Atlanta, former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Other key members of the project: Executive Director **Charles Boyd** (coordinates with the cochairs and the commissioners, directs the operation of the Study Group and Staff); Deputy Executive Director **Arnold Punaro**, Major General, USMCR (Science Applications International Corporation); Chief of Staff **Hank Scharpenberg** (National Security Study Group); Study Group Coordinator **Dr. Pat Pentland** (Research Analyst, Policy, Strategy, and Forces Division at Center for Naval Analyses). For more information, see the commission's Internet site: <http://www.nssg.gov>.
2. Hart-Rudman Commission website, [http://www.nssg.gov/About\\_US/Charter/Charter.htm](http://www.nssg.gov/About_US/Charter/Charter.htm), February 2001.
3. Commission on National Security/21<sup>st</sup> Century, *New World Coming: American Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, September 1999).
4. USCNS/21, *Seeking a National Strategy: A Concert for Preserving Security and Promoting Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, April 2000).
5. USCNS/21, *Roadmap for National Security: Imperative for Change* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, February 2001).
6. *Ibid.*, p. viii.
7. *Ibid.*, p. x.
8. Hart-Rudman Commission website, [http://www.nssg.gov/About\\_US/Charter/Charter.htm](http://www.nssg.gov/About_US/Charter/Charter.htm), Phase I, September 15, 1999, Phase II, April 15, 2000, Phase III, February 15, 2001.

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