

11-1-2009

Leadership and National Security Reform Conference

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Recommended Citation

Engel, Jeffrey A. Dr. and Cerami, Joseph R. Dr., "Leadership and National Security Reform Conference" (2009). *Articles & Editorials*. 104.
https://press.armywarcollege.edu/articles_editorials/104

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Colloquium Brief

Strategic Studies Institute

*U.S. Army War College and
Bush School of Government and Public
Service, and
Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs
at Texas A&M University*



LEADERSHIP AND NATIONAL SECURITY REFORM

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KEY INSIGHTS:

- Graduate programs in policy schools of public and international affairs are paying increasing attention to the study of leadership and the development of leaders for public service careers. Policy schools at the University of Virginia, Harvard University, and Texas A&M University are finding new ways to educate future leaders; promote interdisciplinary leadership research; and provide a foundation of knowledge and skills for the next generation of government reformers.
- Despite such advances in leadership studies, more remains to be done to improve the ethical education of current and future leaders.
- Further attention should also be paid to the interpersonal and group dynamics of leaders at the nation's highest levels, including the president and his/her upper echelon national security team. While large scale, "whole of government" reform is desired by many scholars and contemporary students of national security policy, the majority of conference panelists expect only incremental change absent a new crisis on the order of the Cold War or the terrorist attacks of September 2001.
- Reforms enacted since those 2001 attacks have made significant improvements in the nation's security apparatus from its Cold War framework, but panelists agree more still must be done to further improve homeland security, intelligence sharing, and counterintelligence coordination, without simultaneously hindering civil liberties protections for citizens.
- Advances in information technology offer tremendous opportunity for further integration of the nation's intelligence community, and similar effort should be made to increase coordination between homeland security operatives at the local, state, and federal level, while paying due attention to the increasing role of cyber security; environmental concerns; and economics, trade, and development.
- The panelists concur that reform should not be politicized. Past experience shows that changes typically occur not with the aid of foresight, but rather in rash response to a new, unforeseen threat. The Cold War and 9/11 offer two examples of mass restructuring of the national security system, with subsequent improvements at a slower pace. Partisanship in this realm can only lead to hasty results, of the kind unlikely to prevent future attacks; indeed, it is only in the spirit of nonpartisanship in security affairs that true reform might withstand the knee-jerk desire to enact immediate reform in the aftermath of a new attack.
- Reform is best done strategically, progressively, and through leadership that combines expertise and experience with a spirit of change.

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Introduction.

On June 24, 2009, the Bush School of Government and Public Service, the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs at Texas A&M University, and the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute conducted a Washington, DC, conference on Leadership and Government Reform. Two panels discussed “Leader Development in Schools of Public Affairs” and “Leadership, National Security, and ‘Whole of Government’ Reforms.”

The conference theme focused on the need for significant changes in leader development and government reform—even more than the post-World War II changes accomplished by the National Security Act of 1947 and the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986—to improve the alignment, coordination, integration, and interoperability among largely autonomous U.S. Government agencies. The two conference panels were challenged to discuss leadership in a broader sense rather than focusing solely at the top, or on presidential leadership. The aim was to think more generally about reform-minded leadership from the top, middle, and entry levels, in order to better prepare the nation for the new security challenges of this still-young 21st century.

Panel 1: Leader Development in Schools of Public Affairs.

Panel 1 included four individuals who are deeply concerned with education, leader development, public policy, international affairs, and ethics. Their publications, teaching and—very importantly—their institutions are all committed to promoting the cause of student development and public service.

In introducing the first panel, Dr. Joseph Cerami commented on the Bush School’s approach to leader development for a graduate school of public and international affairs. One guiding idea is that leadership education is integrated into the 2-year program and not viewed as a stand-alone activity. The Bush School’s curriculum supports student efforts in individual learning and leader development, and recommends that students design their coursework to provide a base of knowledge and skills as a foundation for their desired career

paths. The students’ final, second year, core course is a team-based capstone research project under faculty direction for a real-world client. The Bush School also emphasizes two additional layers of leadership development: first, experiential learning through leadership positions in the student government association, public service organizations, intramurals, internships, and community service; and second, personal development or self-study. The program includes an assessment center and menu of tools for improving self-awareness including online assessments of personality profiles, individual learning styles, a personal assessment of management skills, personal values assessments, and emotional intelligence.

Dr. Eric Patashnik has written extensively on government reform, performance, and public administration and management. Dr. Patashnik discussed his work as Associate Director in establishing the Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. In the course of the Batten School’s dean search, Dr. Patashnik compiled a list of ideas their finalists shared about the need for integrating leadership and public policy. Those ideas emphasized efforts to:

- Feature courses that bring together leadership and public policy through successful and failed cases of change management and innovation.
- Emphasize leadership across policy networks.
- Understand a variety of leadership roles, along with the significance of context and leading at different organizational levels.
- Focus on leadership successes rather than just distilling lessons from failures.
- Teach followership skill, emphasizing listening, feedback, and challenging behaviors.
- Think about leadership in a number of courses, not just one course, and weave leadership studies throughout the curriculum.
- Break down the concept of leadership into discrete, teachable skills (speaking, writing, missions, crisis, negotiations, etc.).
- Recognize differences in backgrounds of students by differentiating the curriculum.
- Reimagine the field of leadership by engaging with other social science disciplines.
- Consider leadership in student admissions

selection criteria.

- Define leadership broadly so all faculty and students can see their connections to the field.

Dr. Todd Pittinsky is the Research Director for Harvard Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership (CPL). Its webpage notes that their Center is "dedicated to excellence in leadership education and research...by creating opportunities for reflection and discovery for students, scholars, and practitioners from different disciplines, sectors, cultures, and nations that promotes a dynamic exchange of ideas." Dr. Pittinsky introduced his research on leading across boundaries and intergroup leadership. He suggested that by focusing on collective identity, taking a group of different individuals and finding commonalities between them, groups will discover ways to integrate their strengths rather than solely focusing on who they are as individuals.

The fourth panelist was Dr. Joel Rosenthal of the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. The Carnegie Council has been hosting U.S. Army War College small group visits to Carnegie-New York, and conducts faculty workshops there on Humanitarian Interventions and other topics regarding the military, international affairs, and ethical leadership. As their webpage says, "The Carnegie Council is the world's leading voice promoting ethical leadership on issues of war, peace and global social justice." Rosenthal explored the connection between ethics and leadership, suggesting that there is a need for schools of public affairs to follow the lead of other professional schools, like business, medicine, etc., who offer separate courses on ethics. Referring to a previous panelist's comments and the Bush School's mission of preparing principled leaders, Dr. Rosenthal posed the question, "What is Principled Leadership?" He suggested three ideas at its core: (1) pluralism, an appreciation for diversity while exercising what is common in the human condition; (2) principles of rights, what he referred to as the "rock bottom moral argument"; and (3) fairness. In summary, Dr. Rosenthal emphasized the importance and moral obligation we have to continuously discuss and study ethics, which he suggests should be seen as "the rudder and keel—the things that keep one moving forward and in the right direction."

Panel 2: Leadership, National Security, and Whole of Government Reforms.

The second panel, chaired by the Interim Director of the Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs, Dr. Jeffrey A. Engel, explored the role of leadership and "whole of government" reform in national security. Surely there has been no lack of attention to government reform since 9/11, and indeed since the end of the Cold War that preceded it. The current Obama administration made national security reform, both in tone and in practice, one of the signatures of its electoral campaign. As several speakers noted, however, such an emphasis on reform was intended more for public consumption than for bureaucratic reorganization, which is hardly a new phenomenon in American electoral politics. The panelists charged with addressing this vital topic of national security reform included academics, practitioners, historians, and contemporary policy analysts.

The panel began with Mr. Geoffrey French, Analytic Director of Security Risk for CENTRA Technology, Inc., a leading contractor in the area of homeland security and risk analysis for the U.S. Government, in particular for the Departments of Homeland Security, Defense, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. French opened the discussion of leadership, national security, and government reform by focusing on homeland security and intelligence. In particular, he emphasized the need to consolidate current forums and functions and avoid duplicating mechanisms for information sharing. He suggested focusing on fusion centers as the forum for information exchange and the need for common terminology to connect homeland security and intelligence agencies. In concluding his arguments, Mr. French emphasized the notion that if homeland security intelligence exists, then the nation should also improve its homeland security counterintelligence.

The next speaker, Dr. James Goldgeier of the George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs and the Council on Foreign Relations, addressed the role of ideology and worldview in shaping American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. He also discussed the way that worldview in turn framed the range of possible avenues of reform for the Clinton, George W. Bush,

and now Obama administrations. Dr. Goldgeier's comments on international security were supported by his recent research focus on the transition from the end of the Cold War into the post-Cold War periods. In particular, he mentioned contending ideas on America's post-Cold War role. Examples included the debate between the 1992 draft Defense Planning Guidance of Cheney and Wolfowitz versus the January 1993 State Department document by Secretary Eagleburger about the significance of the global economy and the need to develop a National Economic Council to complement the work of the National Security Council. Dr. Goldgeier also addressed the need for training public and international affairs professionals in the new forces at work in economics, energy, and cyber policy areas.

Dr. Richard Immerman of Temple University, and more recently of the Directorate of National Intelligence, spoke concerning the myriad ways academic and intellectually-informed ideas about how reform within the intelligence community (in particular following 9/11 and the Iraq War) did or did not succeed in practice. His lesson: given that reform is hard, even for the most well-intentioned, we should be giving more attention to current history to critically examine the details of intelligence reform. He provided a narrative on what he evaluates as an important reform effort undertaken by the Director of National Intelligence. Immerman focused on institutional initiatives. In particular, he shared the significance of the initiatives by Tom Fingars of the Directorate of National Intelligence who challenged the intelligence analytical community to reform, embrace change, and lead the development of a community of intelligence analysts.

Dr. Andrew Preston of Cambridge University concluded the panel. As a leading historian of the McGeorge Bundy era at the National Security Council and thus of reforms in the transition between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, Dr. Preston is uniquely positioned to comment on the similarity of reformist impulses now and in the past. His conclusion: a more recent perspective on reform, specifically, that orchestrated by Brent Scowcroft during his second term as National Security Adviser (under George H. W. Bush), provides the real model from which other reformers might best learn. While not commenting on the relative policy effectiveness of recent administrations, Dr. Preston

emphasized how in a functional and organizational sense the current national security councils have for the most part been strikingly similar to that of Bundy's National Security Council during the Kennedy administration, which he believes "got it right." He identified the key Bundy innovation as being the significance of the presidential advisory role (in addition to managing the national security policy process). Dr. Preston also recognized the Bundy approach of the National Security Council operating like a small State Department, a practice perfected by Scowcroft, who Dr. Preston assesses as "unquestionably" the most effective national security advisor in U.S. history.

Taken as a whole, these panels demonstrate the need for government reform in the area of national security, but simultaneously the need to include further emphasis on leadership and leader development—especially in areas such as economics, information sharing, and ethics—for any reform to have true meaning. While the weight and size of national security programs naturally compel critiques, no thoughtful observer disputes the necessity for reform of the national security apparatus. Yet by and large America's post 9/11 security agencies and institutions retain their Cold War design. The National Security Act of 1947 remains, even after the Cold War, the defining charter of the nation's security system. A new era of reform is needed for this new age, and the panelists, in their detailed remarks and forthcoming papers, offered a litany of concrete and theoretical suggestions for melding the nation's security needs to its 21st century threats, while simultaneously developing the kind of effective and ethical leaders necessary to create a 21st century national security system.

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