Crisis Management Lessons from the Clinton Administration's Implementation of Presidential Decision Directive 56

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Prologue

In the wake of the Battle of Mogadishu, Somalia, on October 3-4, 1993, in which 19 American servicemembers were killed and 73 injured, I was tasked to lead an effort to discern the strategic lessons to be learned from the ill-fated US intervention. The study highlighted several shortfalls: the absence of a clear US strategy and whole-of-government plan for the operation, the onset of mission creep as the operation evolved from a humanitarian mission into a manhunt for a notorious Somali warlord, the lack of coordination across the US government agencies and other coalition partners involved, and the failure to maintain proper oversight of execution as one presidential administration transitioned to the next. The study's recommendations, which were briefed to the secretary of defense, the national security adviser, and other key participants, ultimately led to a more integrated US approach to planning for US operations in Haiti in 1994 as well as a new Presidential Decision Directive 56 (PDD-56), *Managing Complex Contingency Operations.*

In this context, Len Hawley, a retired Army colonel, who as a civilian served as the director of multilateral affairs, became the National Security Council's (NSC) point person to lead the implementation of PDD-56. Throughout his tenure in the Clinton administration, Len oversaw the drafting of more than 40 political-military plans for contingencies ranging from East Timor to Kosovo. These plans sought to incorporate the costly lessons of Somalia in an effort to improve the outcomes and reduce the risks associated with US contingency operations overseas.

After 25 years in the Army, Len continued to serve his country as a civilian leader in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the NSC staff, and the 9/11 Commission staff. This article is the last piece Len wrote before he died of complications from leukemia in 2020. It is full of the insights and wisdom of an unsung hero who was an extraordinary public servant, strategic thinker, and beloved mentor and colleague to many.

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Importance of Interagency Management and Planning

Since the end of the Cold War, the national security environment has placed new demands on American leadership abroad. As Thomas J. Friedman wrote in 2002, "the lesson of 9/11 is that if we do not visit the world's bad neighborhoods, they will surely visit us."[1] This strategy is employed because local conflicts in distant places can lead to threats to US citizens and facilities abroad, incite fanaticism and import terrorism to the US homeland, undermine regional stability and development, displace whole population groups and create refugee crises, perpetrate human rights abuses and atrocities, empower corrupt governments, and strengthen organized criminal syndicates.

Warfare has fundamentally changed since the early 1990s in that conflict has become more nonmilitary, irregular, and hybrid in nature. The 9/11 Commission concluded that while the American military and allied armed forces needed to find and destroy terrorist groups in the field, the future US counterterrorism strategy must be balanced.[2] Long-term success demands the use of all elements of national power: diplomacy, intelligence, law enforcement, border control, financial controls, cybersecurity, economic development, public diplomacy, and homeland defense. A successful US response to a future threatening adversary will likely rely heavily upon civilian agency capabilities rather than applying entirely military coercion and force. This shift places even greater reliance on interagency planning of US multidimensional crisis responses.

In the face of these challenges, the Biden-Harris administration can learn from the Clinton administration's implementation of Presidential Decision Directive 56 (PDD-56), *Managing Complex Contingency Operations*, which ensured the unity of effort in interagency planning of multidimensional coalition operations for international crisis response.[3] Drawing upon my personal experience implementing PDD-56 and overseeing the drafting of 44 political-military plans as director of multilateral affairs during the Clinton administration, this article distills lessons for effective strategic planning to address prospective future complex emergencies that could

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1. Thomas L. Friedman, "9/11 Lesson Plan," *New York Times*, September 4, 2002, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/04/opinion/9-11-lesson-plan.html.
2. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, "What to Do? A Global Strategy," in *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington, DC: National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, 2004), https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Ch12.htm.
3. National Security Council (NSC), *Managing Complex Contingency Operations*, Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) 56 (Washington, DC: NSC, 1997), https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-56.pdf.

profoundly affect vital US interests.[4] These emergencies could range from a September 11, 2001-style terrorist attack on the United States to armed ethnic conflict to massive climate catastrophes and other natural disasters.

No country, however powerful, can deal with such complex emergencies alone. While US leadership will be essential, the US government will need the support of allied and friendly nations in responding to these emergencies successfully. Indeed, not only will responses require cooperation between nations, but any US response will call for disparate agency efforts to be integrated into a coherent strategy to achieve US policy aims. Thus, strategies for international collaboration and interagency management and planning, like those promoted by PDD-56, are essential to ensure the US government fully integrates all agencies when responding to foreign emergencies.

Genesis of Presidential Decision Directive 56

Presidential Decision Directive 56, crafted in response to a series of crises in the 1990s, highlighted the need for greater international and interagency cooperation. Its practicality and utility are best understood as a by-product of the lessons its crafters and implementers learned from these crises.

For example, the 1992–93 intervention in Somalia was a failure in nearly all respects—impeded by meager interagency strategic planning in Washington and contentious coalition operations in Somalia. Marine Lieutenant General Anthony Zinni, the director of operations for the United Task Force Somalia, frequently spoke about "twenty lessons learned," emphasizing the necessity of better integrating civilian and military efforts.[5] His lessons signaled a growing appreciation for effective interagency management and political-military planning as being critical to the quality of policy decisions and the success of complex contingency operations.

On the heels of the Somali intervention, the 1994 intervention in Haiti marked the Clinton administration's first venture into organized interagency management and political-military planning. Before the intervention, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili briefed President Clinton on the campaign plan to seize Haiti. Afterward, the

4. Dennis Skocz, director of State Political-Military Affair's Office of Contingency Planning and Peacekeeping, had daily conversations with NSC staff members planning complex contingencies and compiled a list of 44 distinct political-military planning efforts in response to foreign crises.
5. Anthony Zinni, "LtGen. Zinni's Twenty Lessons Learned for Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Operations" (keynote address, transcript), http://cidbimena.desastres.hn/docum/crid/Marzo2006/CD2/pdf/eng/doc10309/doc10309-c.pdf.

president asked, "How long will this take?" The chairman replied, "Sir, we will secure Haiti in about a week." Then the president turned to several of his policy advisers and asked, "What happens in the second week?" No one had an answer.[6]

In reaction, NSC Senior Director for Global Affairs Richard Clarke established an assistant secretary-level executive committee to prepare an interagency political-military plan that designated objectives for the first six months of the Haiti endeavor. Clarke ensured the NSC staff worked closely with senior officials at the Pentagon, the Justice and State Departments, the US Agency for International Development, the US Information Agency, and the CIA. Their collaboration resulted in an overarching plan for civilian and military activities that would achieve realistic political, security, humanitarian, rule of law, and economic conditions on the ground.

Days before the Haiti intervention, Clarke had his assistant secretaries conduct rehearsals of each agency's responsibilities for operational success for the Deputies Committee. With the NSC staff leading this innovative planning effort, the US government secured the gains achieved by the US military takeover of Haiti. Although only a first step, this pioneering interagency planning effort tested several new management mechanisms for planning and conducting future complex contingency operations.

Early in 1995, following the initial progress achieved in Haiti, Clarke asked Michèle Flournoy, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, to draft a presidential directive to capture the emerging interagency management mechanisms and planning activities that proved effective in the Haiti intervention. Flournoy codified Clarke's management vision to hold administration officials at the assistant secretary level accountable for the programs, the people, and the funds required for successful operations. If agency stovepipes emerged during a US crisis response, the fault would lie with uncooperative assistant secretaries in Washington—not lower-ranking agency officials working on the front line.

Flournoy's draft outlined a broad and flexible crisis management framework that dealt with a wide range of crises and strengthened the unity of effort by harmonizing civilian and military endeavors during an intervention. It also included two important initiatives—an after-action review to capture lessons learned and annual training to develop US expertise in planning future multidimensional operations. By mid-1995, the

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6.   Author recollection of conversation following briefing by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili, 1994.

draft entered the cumbersome, legalistic vetting and clearance process for presidential directives.

Applying Flournoy's draft of PDD-56, Clarke quickly established an interagency working group to conduct political-military planning for the small UN peace implementation mission in Eastern Slavonia, a territory of Croatia seized by Serbia in 1991. The administration's plan guided the establishment of the UN Transitional Authority for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja, and Western Sirmium, which proved to be an effective invention. After 1995, the Clinton administration encountered continued occurrences of state collapse, ethnic and religious conflict, threats of genocide, and the rise of criminal states, all of which forced reluctant policymakers to deal selectively with crises abroad. From 1995 to 2001 under PDD-56, the Clinton administration planned over 40 interventions in Eastern Slavonia, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Burundi (potential genocide), the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea-Ethiopia, North Korea (potential collapse), Iraq, Serbia, Kosovo, East Timor, Kashmir, and Lebanon. With the NSC staff leading the interagency working groups in these political-military planning efforts, credible American leadership emerged across the international community.

By 1998 the Deputies Committee became accustomed to relying upon the NSC staff to lead interagency working groups in anticipation of impending crises adversely affecting US interests. The lessons learned from these complex interventions were articulated in the *Generic Political-Military Implementation Plan*.[7] Initially only six pages long, the plan grew to 59 pages as it incorporated new lessons from ongoing missions. Senior civilian and military officials, well after the Clinton administration, regularly used this plan.

Kosovo: A Case Study of Success

The need for greater interagency management and planning and the positive impact of PDD-56 upon planning can best be seen in the contrast between the Bosnian crisis and the intervention in Kosovo. The bitter crisis in Bosnia greeted the Clinton administration's arrival in office. And soon, the US effort became mired in the same problems experienced in Somalia—meager strategic planning and contentious coalition operations. Unfortunately, the 1995 Dayton Accords contained only a single mention of coordination by the civilian and military components of the mission, and this coordination was not mandatory. The sharp division was intentional—designed by the Pentagon to ensure the success

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7. National Defense University, "Appendix B: Generic Political-Military Implementation Plan," in *Interagency Management of Complex Crisis Operations Handbook* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2003), https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=33348.

of the military mission would not depend on the performance of the civilian mission. By insulating itself so effectively from the civilian component, the US military guaranteed the failure of both.[8] In Kosovo, a tight working relationship between civilian and military efforts was forged in response to the failure of this relationship in Bosnia.

In 1998 as senior officials and political-military planners looked ahead to the emerging crisis in Kosovo, the theme was "let us not do Bosnia ever again."[9] Reliance upon interagency planning and coalition operations as outlined in PDD-56, therefore, became central to several Deputies Committee decisions. To advance his war aims, Serbia's President Slobodan Milošević used various tactics to undermine unity among NATO allies, including the ruthless 1999 displacement of 850,000 ethnic Albanian citizens of Kosovo.[10] As the crisis unfolded, US leadership prevented a reversal in security cooperation between Russia and NATO and kept the Balkans peace process on track.

The Clinton administration recognized Milošević as a serious threat to NATO's cohesion and European Union solidarity. Following the successful NATO air campaign to pressure Milošević to exit Kosovo, US policymakers determined the international community needed to mount an unprecedented joint UN/NATO transitional administration for Kosovo to secure NATO's military success. Authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1244, the UN/NATO mission established an interim civil administration for the country as the first step toward Kosovo's substantial autonomy.[11]

Between 1998 and 2001, the Clinton administration planned a series of international interventions for Kosovo, including coercive diplomacy, sanctions enforcement, humanitarian relief, a diplomatic observer mission, a NATO air campaign, peace implementation, stabilization, and reconstruction. The administration completed as many as six sequential policy-planning efforts, each contributing significantly to the successful establishment of stability in the Balkans and leading to the eventual removal, apprehension, and conviction of Milošević by the International Criminal Tribunal. Kosovo declared its

8.   Jock Covey, "The Custodian of the Peace Process," in *The Quest for Viable Peace: International Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation*, ed. Jock Covey, Michael J. Dziedzic, and Leonard R. Hawley (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005).

9.   Michele A. Poole, "Interagency Management of Complex Contingency Operations: The Impact of Presidential Decision Directive 56" (master's thesis, Naval Post Graduate School, 2001), 30, https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA397246.pdf.

10.   Michael Dziedzic, Laura Mercean, and Elton Skendaj, "Kosovo: The Kosovo Liberation Army" in *Quest for Viable Peace: International Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation*, ed. Jock Covey, Michael J. Dziedzic, and Leonard R. Hawley (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005), 156.

11.   UN Security Council, Resolution 1244, Kosovo, S/RES/1244, June 10, 1999, https://undocs.org/S/RES/1244(1999).

independence in February 2008—a success for the fledgling nation and proof positive of PDD-56's efficacy for responding to international crises.[12]

Evolution of Successful Crisis Management

The Kosovo case demonstrates the Clinton administration's substantial growth and success in the "art and science" of crisis management. Interagency planners developed insights and learned what it took to achieve success in different situations, whether the international response sought to prevent a crisis, wage war, protect human life, or implement peace. Many lessons required planners to reexamine their perceptions of a given situation, including allowing wishful thinking to flourish without prudent judgment and circumspection; realizing the local situation among fighting groups as well as adversaries and spoilers are poorly understood and often misjudged; being wary of dismissing ill-defined threats as unlikely; overlooking potent corrupt economic incentives; underestimating operational needs for a response, both civilian and military; misreading partners' commitments and realizing hopeful projections of indigenous popular support are wrong; understanding that instruments of government action are inadequate or irrelevant; and failing to ask the question: *What happens next?* These insights advanced the art and science of policy planning for crisis response and created a pragmatic appreciation for the many obstacles confronting government leaders.

Over time, Clinton administration policymakers and interagency planners became more risk-conscious. As they sought to understand the many unintended consequences when planning a crisis response, they set aside unrealistic expectations for a quick fix and exit and accumulated a sophisticated appreciation for the complementary civilian and military contributions of a US government response. Diplomacy, political moderation, military security, humanitarian relief, public safety, economic assistance, governance, human rights, public diplomacy, and social reconciliation—interdependent major mission areas that were embraced within PDD-56 planning efforts—became even more critical.

Art of Crisis Management

Clinton administration planners realized policymakers need flexibility and want credible options rather than a detailed political-military plan right up to the eleventh hour of an intervention. Conversely, agencies want a plan that spells out agency roles, specific objectives, timelines for implementation,

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12.   Dziedzic, Mercean, and Skendaj, "Kosovo," 191; and Poole, "Interagency Management," 67.

and workable coordinating mechanisms. It is important to note that there is considerable tension between the needs of policymakers for flexible options versus the needs of agencies for clear guidance when planning assigned tasks as directed by a political-military plan.

Over time interagency planners crafted the "Advance Pol-Mil Planning Process" to address the demands of policymakers and the needs of agency planners simultaneously.[13] This cutting-edge process impacted NSC-led interagency crisis management efforts, avoided critical interagency problems, and generated an integrated, whole-of-government civilian-military intervention plan to advance US interests abroad. This process provided senior US officials with six planning outcomes that:

- Shape prudent US policy aims in a crisis that range between do nothing and save the world.

- Develop a political-military intervention strategy that appreciates the complex situation on the ground and garners international support to respond.

- Identify the range of *unintended consequences* of decisions.

- Clarify *the major mission areas of the intervention* as the core components of an integrated civilian-military campaign.

- Mobilize *allies, partners, and other nations and international organizations* to contribute to the coalitions deemed necessary.

- Facilitate the *hand-off to a follow-on mission* after several years, as local conditions improve to a viable peace, usually a redesigned mission of less size and reduced costs, eventually leading to ownership by the host nation over the coming three to five years.

These outcomes helped balance the need for clear and practical operating procedures at the agency level while providing flexibility at the policy level.

A second refinement focused on decision making within the Principals and Deputies Committees, which became more rigorous after Clinton signed PDD-25, *Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations*. It directed disciplined policy analysis of the conflict situation as policymakers considered response options.[14] The NSC tasked the intelligence community to analyze crisis situations according to baseline and success

13.   Leonard R. Hawley, "The Advance Pol-Mil Planning Process" (unpublished manuscript). This document can be obtained from Michael Dziedzic by sending an e-mail to michaeldz71@gmail.com.

14.   NSC, *US Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations*, PDD-25 (Washington, DC: NSC, 1994), https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-25.pdf.

factors derived from lessons learned during recent missions and provide this information as inputs for the NSC planning process.[15]

NSC officials also relied on assessments from international partners, diplomatic envoys and peace negotiators, officials of regional organizations, and other knowledgeable actors residing in a region. Before a Principals or Deputies Committee meeting, the NSC staff prepared a discussion paper to inform policy deliberations with the support of the interagency working group. Just as the NSC's discussion papers brought together information and issues from disparate sources, so too did the Clinton administration's interagency planning experts in creating a language or science of political-military planning.

Science of Crisis Management

Clinton administration interagency planning experts created distinctive terms to capture their mission and establish a unifying lexicon rather than each agency working from their own. By 1997, this lexicon included new terms such as *transformation strategies*, *major mission areas*, and *instruments of government action,* among others. A related interagency planning evolution involved developing a realistic intervention strategy for mobilizing, wielding, and sustaining global power for interventions. This critical section of the political-military plan, often written by members of the Policy Steering Group who are officials at the deputy assistant secretary/major general level, fused intelligence assessments; confirmed the policy aims of the intervention; clarified the strategic purpose, mission, and near-term objectives; and integrated the international coalition interests needed to gain adequate contributions to support a successful intervention. The resulting intervention strategy became the core section of the political-military plan for an intervention.

In addition, the nature of successful coalition operations evolved with the important distinction between an *intervention* and a *coalition*. Complex contingency operations are mostly multinational and multilateral, which means interventions usually require several different coalitions to get the job done. The international mission in Kosovo, for example, embodied eight coalitions led by the Contact Group (Balkans) (political), NATO (military), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (humanitarian relief), the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (rule of law), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (democratization and institution-building), the European

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15.   Bruce R. Pirnie and William E. Simons, *Soldiers for Peace: Critical Operational Issues* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996).

Union (reconstruction and economic development), the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (human rights), and the G8 (donor coalition).

For interventions to succeed, the political and structural foundations of each coalition had to be organized and set in place during the planning process, and planning efforts had to be married with diplomacy at the assistant secretary/ lieutenant general level. High-level consultations with allies, regional friends, UN Security Council members, international organizations, and other potential contributors were crucial to ensure Washington's political-military plan had buy-in from partners and the various coalitions needed for success.

When Clinton finally signed PDD-56 in May 1997 after a lengthy vetting process, various agencies were already applying a host of institutional reforms. The changes constituted a significant transformation in how the US government conducted interagency planning for crisis response. Under the leadership of Ellen Laipson, vice-chair of the National Intelligence Council, the intelligence community revamped its exercise and training programs to focus on complex emergencies and incorporate PDD-25 baseline factors and success factors into intelligence reporting as a crisis emerged. Meanwhile, the US State Department increased its organizational planning capacity by establishing an Office of Contingency Planning and Peacekeeping within its Bureau of Political-Military Affairs to support the NSC's interagency planning activities.

Within the military, the Joint Staff required all military operational-level plans include an "Annex V (Interagency Coordination)" to address critical civilian agency efforts necessary for military operations. The NSC staff convened several after-action reviews to capture lessons learned from recent planning efforts and interventions that were included in the *Generic Political–Military Implementation Plan*.

At the interagency level, the Deputies Committee approved professional education programs within the Departments of Defense and State to offer courses in interagency planning for crisis response. The War Gaming and Simulation Center at the National Defense University worked with the Foreign Service Institute to sponsor annual interagency training exercises to strengthen the basic skills of mid- and senior-level agency officials. Though the signing of PDD-56 codified the need for interagency cooperation and collaboration, the changes made by these US government agencies acknowledged the utility of the strategies the directive contained long before it was signed.

Overall, the historical evolution of the art and science of interagency planning for multidimensional coalition operations is a story about conceptual evolution coupled with the creation of new institutional mechanisms in the policy planning arena. These innovations demonstrated contingency operations could be successful despite their situational complexity, political controversy, and pressures for disunity among US departments and agencies.

Dismantling of PDD-56

Soon after taking office in January 2001, the Bush administration dismantled the Clinton administration's interagency planning capabilities.[16] Bush discarded the *NSC-centric approach* embraced by PDD-56 and adopted an *agency-centric approach* in National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 1: *Organization of the National Security System*.[17] The consequence of this action was that under Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, the Pentagon held the dominant role in crisis management in the Bush administration.

The dismantling of the PDD-56 process came quickly. In early 2002 James Dobbins, the US special envoy for Afghanistan, urged the Deputies Committee to get interagency political-military planning up and running for Afghanistan, but his proposal went nowhere. A ranking official at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, at the direction of Rumsfeld, discarded a draft presidential directive prepared by the Joint Staff that was akin to PDD-56. In the run up to the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Rumsfeld leveraged the Bush administration's agency-centric approach for crisis management to relegate senior officials of the State Department, the US Agency for International Development, the Justice Department, and other civilian agencies to the back row in policy decision making and planning.[18]

The Bush administration did not draw on interagency strategic planning capacity for its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This serious deficiency, exacerbated by feuding among senior leaders of departments and agencies, resulted in serious gaps and disconnects on the ground. In 2004 after just one year in Iraq, Americans witnessed the violent Sunni revolt in Fallujah, the hostile Shia uprising, and the scandalous pictures of torture in the US prison at Abu Ghraib. After three years of stalemate in Afghanistan, Congress in late 2004 asserted intense pressure on the Bush administration to fix its failures

16.   Poole, "Interagency Management," 65.
17.   NSC, *Organization of the National Security Council System*, National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 1 (Washington, DC: NSC, 2001), https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/index.html.
18.   David Von Drehle, "Rumsfeld Seized the Wheel of Power—and Steered Us Terribly into War," *Washington Post*, July 2, 2021.

in interagency strategic planning and correct its structural deficiencies for conducting complex contingency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.[19]

In August 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell announced the establishment of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to lead, coordinate, and institutionalize US government civilian capacity to prevent conflict and plan for stabilization operations. In June 2005, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers cited the importance of S/CRS for an integrated approach to peacekeeping, reconstruction, and stability operations and to relieve stress on the armed forces.[20] In November 2005, the Pentagon published DoD Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations,* which gave stability and reconstruction operations priority comparable to combat operations.[21] Eventually, in December 2005, President Bush signed NSPD-44 that sought to empower the secretary of state, facilitated by the newly formed S/CRS, to lead and coordinate the US government response in reconstruction and stabilization missions across all involved agencies and to work with the secretary of defense to harmonize civilian and military activities.[22]

None of the Bush administration initiatives created under the agency-centric approach favored by Rumsfeld in 2005 proved to be effective in crisis management. S/CRS produced some useful work, such as the Interagency Management System, to improve cooperation and planning between the Defense and State Departments and other departments and agencies.[23] The Interagency Management System, however, was entirely disconnected from decision making for crisis management by Bush Deputies and Principal Committees. Moreover, the powerful regional bureaus of the State Department and offices of the US Agency for International Development saw the work of S/CRS as infringing on their turf, and Congressional appropriations committees never provided sufficient funding or staffing for S/CRS. Most important, the Pentagon ignored S/CRS efforts to lead interagency planning because of its prevailing view that the Pentagon does not work for the secretary of state.

19.   Nina M. Serafino, *Peacekeeping/Stabilization and Conflict Transitions: Background and Congressional Action on the Civilian Response/Reserve Corps and other Civilian Stabilization and Reconstruction Capabilities*, Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report RL32862 (Washington, DC: CRS, February 5, 2009), https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA494853.pdf.

20.   *Status of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps in Fighting the Global War on Terrorism: Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services of the United States Senate*, 109th Cong., (2005), 13, https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-109shrg28577/pdf/CHRG-109shrg28577.pdf.

21.   Department of Defense (DoD), *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, DoD Directive 3000.05 (Washington, DC: DoD, 2005), https://policy.defense.gov/portals/11/Documents/solic/DoDD%203000.05%20SSTR%20(SIGNED)%2028NOV05.pdf.

22. NSC, *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, NSPD-44 (Washington, DC: NSC, 2005), https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-44.html.

23.   Serafino, *Peacekeeping/Stabilization*.

The key lesson from the Bush administration's unsuccessful responses to crises is that policy decision making and interagency political-military planning must go hand in hand. This relationship thrived during the Clinton administration because it applied the NSC-centric approach under PDD-56 to manage crises. In contrast, the Bush administration's agency-centric approach under NSPD-44 allowed Rumsfeld to control crisis decision making and skew planning toward military priorities, without a corresponding civilian contribution by other US departments and agencies or from international organizations. Rumsfeld's domination of the process expedited dysfunction in Washington, which led to costly, stalemated missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The salient lesson for future administrations is that an *NSC-centric approach* will not always guarantee success, but an *agency-centric approach* will surely lead to failure.

Recurring Weaknesses and Critical Problems in Interagency Collaboration

The critical problems examined in this section are based on my personal involvement in managing the preparation of over 40 political-military plans as NSC director for multilateral affairs. They highlight interagency planning deficiencies and their adverse impact on effective crisis management. Most of these deficiencies are correctable, and best practices and achievable solutions for dealing with them are elaborated in the following section.

Insufficient authority for the NSC staff. Over reliance on an agency-centric as opposed to an NSC-centric model for crisis management encourages discord, turf protection, inefficiency, planning failures, and unforeseen disconnects that lead to severe adverse consequences for operational success in the field.

Excessive growth of the NSC staff. The NSC staff's enormous size of about 300 professionals in recent years encourages the NSC to assume agency operational responsibilities rather than to integrate, oversee, and focus agency officials in support of the policy decisions of the Deputies and Principals Committees.

Mistrusted dialogue between the intelligence and policy communities. Discussions are often unproductive when intelligence professionals risk retribution from policymakers when providing early warning, situation assessments, historical analyses, and political forecasts necessary for timely anticipation of a potential crisis.

Predisposition by assistant secretaries to protect agency turf and resources. Assistant secretaries are prone to set aside their responsibilities for integrating their activities with other agencies, thereby creating independent, disconnected agency stovepipes in the field.

Inadequate professional competence among senior officials. Most rising civilian and military officials do not appreciate their professional limitations for collaborative leadership and integrated policy planning, leading to high-level wariness and resistance to applying best practices for interagency crisis management.

Inconsistent concepts of planning across agencies. Most agency planners do not appreciate that planning an international intervention is fundamentally different from their traditional agency planning methods.[24] Their distinctive agency planning methods are not relevant to requirements for NSC-led policy planning of an intervention.

Inadequate information sharing among agencies creates disconnects and disunity. Many US government officials consider information as power and fail to share it with other agencies, thus breeding an unwelcome lack of trust within an interagency planning group.

Parochial personnel management. Agency career tracks and assignment policies discourage personnel who take broadening assignments in other agencies. Cross-agency assignments are scorned as diversions from mainstream career paths.

Disappointing return on investments in agency training and exercises. Although considerable agency money is spent on training and exercises, the return on these investments is disappointing because interagency issues are rarely designed into agency exercises.

Absence of a funding line for the NSC to support interagency training, tabletop exercises, and strategy games. NSC staff must search for the funding needed for training, exercises, and strategy games which impedes the development of expertise in interagency planning for crisis response.

Disconnected agency budgets supporting foreign interventions. The practice of submitting separate agency budgets to support each agency's responsibilities in

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24.   A similar critical distinction is made by James M. Dubik, *Just War Reconsidered: Strategy, Ethics, and Theory* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2016). See also Leonard R. Hawley and Dennis Skocz, "Advance Political-Military Planning: Laying the Foundation for Achieving Viable Peace" in *The Quest for Viable Peace: International Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation*, ed. Jock Covey, Michael J. Dziedzic, and Leonard R. Hawley (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2005).

a foreign intervention results in an ad hoc, fragmented budgeting system that usually leads to critical program funding shortfalls and execution delays.

Several reports and studies suggest the reform of the US government's interagency process for crisis management must be driven by Congress, in a manner similar to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. This landmark legislation created horizontal structures and processes to strengthen jointness among the military services within the Department of Defense.

Presidential prerogatives in structuring the US government interagency to meet emerging foreign policy and national security priorities, however, should be preserved. One of the most valuable features of the current system is that the president has complete constitutional authority to tailor existing interagency capabilities of the US government to address emerging threats effectively (for example, cybersecurity). Legislation dictating rigid bureaucratic arrangements which would jeopardize the flexibility now granted to the president to retool the interagency policy-making system to deal with new threats and seize emerging opportunities should be avoided. The executive and legislative branches must find the right balance between the need to adapt rapidly to emerging national security threats and the need for oversight.

Best Practices for Interagency Planning and Coalition Operations

Fortunately, seasoned Clinton administration interagency planners confronted many of these problems and found solutions under PDD-56, thereby improving unity of effort in interagency planning for multidimensional coalition operations. What follows are best practices for addressing these recurring problems.

Interagency planning is best directed and coordinated by the NSC staff. Consensus building is critical to effective interagency planning. The NSC staff often champions an overarching US policy perspective compared to agency officials. Under the NSC-centric model, the NSC plays a decisive role as an advocate for US policy aims with the clout necessary to bring closure to disputes over narrow agency interests.

Senior officials need to be collaborative leaders. Appointees at the deputy assistant secretary/major general level or higher should regularly demonstrate the attributes of effective collaborative leadership in interagency activities.[25]

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25. Russell M. Linden, *Leading across Boundaries: Creating Collaborative Agencies in a Networked World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

High-performing senior officials who are collaborative leaders prefer a mutual effort to find solutions to complex problems, listen to other points of view, and are committed to building consensus among counterparts.

Processes help manage the overwhelming complexity of crisis situations. An important benefit of the Advance Political-Military Planning Process is that it can reduce the complexities associated with international crises. This NSC-led interagency planning process can help senior officials better understand an emerging crisis, including its historical roots, its local politics, possible scenarios, the risks associated with a crisis response, and the gravity of US concerns.

Effective interagency planning improves the quality and timeliness of policy decisions. The clarification of policy issues is a core purpose of interagency planning. Most immediate and longer-term policy questions are identified in the Advance Political-Military Planning Process and are brought to principals and deputies in a timely manner to support their decision making for an effective response to a crisis.

Expertise in policy planning for crisis response must be assiduously developed. This special knowledge is critical to creating conditions for policy development, crafting effective strategies, and integrating available instruments of power. Few mid-level officials have an in-depth understanding of these special skills. An interagency training and exercise program in crisis management is an absolute necessity to develop this expertise.

The intelligence community needs to be advised of the issues being confronted by policymakers. Intelligence officials need advance notice of issues being considered by Principals and Deputies Committees so a focused intelligence summary can be distributed to committee members and NSC staff 24 hours prior to their meeting.

Build trust within interagency planning groups by encouraging sensible information sharing. There is no need for sharing sources and methods, but sharing unbiased assessments is critical for the interagency planning team to understand the nature of complex challenges and to find integrated solutions. The NSC chair of the Interagency Planning Group should seek consensus about how shared sensitive information will be protected and the practices needed to achieve this.

Informal dialogue among agency officials is crucial. Informal discussions among agency officials are often more constructive than formal meetings. Such communications are aided by the cross assignment of personnel and habitual relationships within the interagency planning community. The trick is to bring together officials within diverse interagency clusters of functional planners, such as military officers and human rights officials, in ways that promote new understanding and unity of effort through friendly crosstalk over a cup of coffee.

An intervention requires many different coalitions. A large, complex intervention usually requires a political coalition to steer international action and support, a military coalition to conduct security operations, a humanitarian coalition to provide relief, a rule of law coalition to provide public security and justice, a political-economic coalition to build a legitimate economy, a development coalition to support post-intervention reconstruction, a human rights coalition to address abuses, and a donor coalition to pay for operations. Each coalition has both political and structural foundations that must be set up and managed by its leading partner.

Coalitions are always ad hoc and inherently fragile. A standing coalition that can be quickly deployed within a week is a planning fantasy. Each intervention is essentially a pick-up game where willing participants in an ad hoc fashion come to play. The core group of an international intervention is formed very early in the interagency planning process because this small group of nations makes a significant contribution to the planning and mobilization of other nations and international organizations to participate in the intervention. Cohesion is essential to success, yet unity can be quite fragile compared to an adversary leader's single-minded will and determination. Capable leadership among political directors of a core group of coalition partners is central to the success of an intervention.

Consolidated budgets for foreign interventions. The US government cannot rely upon separate agency budget submissions for programs supporting field activities for foreign interventions (for example, deployments, relief activities, military operations, police missions, and elections). The Office of Management and Budget should consolidate these one-year agency budgets into a single consolidated three-year budget request, updated annually, for funding the intervention. Authorized by a Joint Committee of Congress for Foreign Contingencies, a single consolidated budget passed on time each fiscal year will reinforce unity of effort for integrated civilian-military activities.

While these practices will alleviate most of the weaknesses and problems identified in the previous section part of what makes the NSC-centric approach laid out in PDD-56 so successful is its responsiveness to individual situations. Thus, each new crisis will create new and unique problems and while these best practices can be applied broadly, no two crises are the same.

Recommendations for Effective Crisis Management

The deadly global COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the ensuing global economic disaster, has created an even more turbulent and dangerous world than the one faced following the Cold War. Great power competition will only make foreign crises more dangerous. To meet this challenge, the Biden-Harris administration's earliest and highest priority should be to establish a renewed PDD-56 process. The following recommendations for updating PDD-56 are distilled from my experience managing the preparation of 44 political-military plans during the Clinton administration:

Structuring the Interagency
for Effective Crisis-Response Planning

To provide battle-tested management practices and implementing instructions for Presidential Security Memorandum (PSM) 2: *Renewing the National Security Council System,* the Biden-Harris administration should prepare a PSM drawing on PDD-56 to operationalize an NSC-centric approach to managing complex contingencies.[26] The NSC senior director for strategic planning should be empowered with authority across the US government. The office should be staffed with planners who are collectively capable of managing about five to seven complex emergencies and ongoing missions.

To identify operational issues for emerging political-military implementation plans, the Office of the Secretary of Defense Undersecretary for Policy should host a one-day "Red-Blue-Gray" strategy game involving participants at the deputy assistant secretary/major general level from relevant departments and agencies, including the J-5 director of planning at the relevant combatant command(s). This game would help clarify the regional crisis scenario and US and allied concerns, identify likely countermoves by bad actors, and highlight surprising events and outcomes that might unfold through time.

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26.   "Renewing the National Security Council System," White House (website), February 4, 2021, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/04/memorandum-renewing-the-national-security-council-system/.

To support the timely execution of interagency planning by the designated Interagency Policy Committee for the crisis response, the Biden-Harris administration should direct specific intelligence assessments provided by the National Intelligence Council that focus on early warning, comprehensive situation assessments, historical analyses, political forecasts, and personality assessments of bad actors/spoilers.

Finally, a political-military implementation plan should be the primary tool used for integrating US government actions and managing complex contingency operations with coalition partners. Prior to the execution of the plan, a rehearsal should be conducted to review the political-military plan's main elements with each Interagency Policy Committee official presenting to the Deputies or Principals Committee. The sequential implementation for their major mission area, triggers and decision points, any unresolved policy issues, and the adequacy of resources required for their major mission area should be included.

Setting Up the Interagency for Success

The Interagency Policy Committee should conduct an after-action/lessons-learned review at the end of each major stage of the complex contingency operation to capture lessons learned. Appointees at the deputy assistant secretary/major general level and higher should be required to attend a one-week, senior-level professional development course that addresses the administration's interagency planning process and imparts the talents and skills necessary for effective collaborative leadership in interagency activities.[27] To improve America's ability to manage future operations, an interagency training and exercise program should be created within US government agencies to develop a cadre of professionals familiar with the political-military planning process. All departments and agencies involved should be directed to conduct a review to identify agency upgrades to support timely implementation of the provisions of a PSM for managing complex contingency operations.

Implementation of these recommendations will take a serious commitment by the president and senior NSC officials to strengthen interagency planning for international crisis response. As this article has demonstrated, however, the PDD-56 process anticipated the exponential increase in global interconnectivity and consequent need for collaboration between nations and within the US government. To date, the directive remains the most successful template for balancing military and civilian planning in a world where the need for effective crisis management is only growing larger and more prevalent.

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27.   Linden, *Leading across Boundaries*.

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