

Introduction: Power, Security, and Leadership in the 21st Century

Government leaders must use the instruments of national power to provide present-day security while setting the conditions for a secure future. Leaders are responsible for envisioning, shaping, and safeguarding the future, creating clarity amidst uncertainty. This is no small feat and it is made increasingly difficult in the 21st century where rapid, unforeseen change seems to be the only constant.

Safeguarding the future requires analysis of the proper relationship between power and security in the 21st century. Given the tremendous change transpiring in every facet of life—culture, governance, economy, energy, climate, and others—any effective analysis must begin with a solid understanding of what power and security mean in this century. Is everything fundamentally different, or do some verities remain? How does a leader think about the relationship between power and security?

In the following piece, we seek to answer many of these questions and provide critical insights that help national security leaders analyze power, security, and decision-making in a time marked by great uncertainty. To do this, we present the perspectives of two leading thinkers, Professor Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and General Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.), respectively. Both bring a rare combination of practical and reflective erudition in this area.

We hope that their perspectives present new ways of thinking about power, security, and leadership in the 21st century. This is the first in a series with the next installment set to examine the decision-making process focusing on the use of intelligence and information. We intend to conclude our series by looking at how information capabilities and leaders' decision-making abilities must change in order to adapt the instruments of power and apply them in securing the future.



Perspectives on the Future of Power, Security, and Leadership with Professor Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Harvard University

A decade into the 21st century, the U.S. has encountered many unforeseen challenges and seemingly unimaginable opportunities. In this ever-more complex world, many question the proper use of power, leadership, and security in international relations. What is smart power? How do the challenges of the 21st century demand a reshaping and redefining of leadership? Professor Joseph S. Nye, Jr., author of The Future of Power, joined us on The Business of Government Hour to provide his perspective on these questions and so much more.

Power and its Dimensions in 21st Century World Affairs

Power is simply the ability to affect others to get the things you want. There are three ways to make this happen. You can threaten people with coercion: sticks. You can pay them: carrots. We sometimes talk about power as though it's just twisting arms, but that's not accurate. You can attract and persuade them to want what you want. This is what I call soft power. In practice, you need to use all three: economic, military, and persuasive power, to create what I call smart power—a combination of hard and soft power. If you can set the agenda for others or help to establish their preferences so that they want what you want, then you can get much done without twisting arms.

The rather simplistic view that marks a great power as one with the ability to prevail in war is probably not adequate for an information age. Today, it's not just whose army wins but whose story wins—whose narrative of soft power wins. If we can get our narrative across, it may mean we don't have to use as much hard power.

Power can be zero-sum, where you have power over others, but it can also be positive sum, where you get what you want by acting with others. We often think too much of power over and not enough about power "with." Let me give you an example. We're concerned about climate change. It can have



damaging effects on the United States. China develops two new coal fired-plants every week that are putting CO₂ in the atmosphere, which is damaging to us. In fact, today China is the superpower of CO₂. They've passed the U.S. in this area. How do you deal with it? In one sense, you can say, "Well, we can bomb those Chinese coal plants." Probably not a good option—you will ensure lots of other costs. Another option would be to begin embargoes, boycotts, or tariffs against Chinese goods. This option would disrupt the international trading system and do us a fair amount of harm. But, if you think about helping the Chinese to reduce the carbon intensity of their growth, then it empowers China; it also is good for us. This is an example of power "with" another country. It may lead to a better way of getting the outcomes we want than just using power over another country, which can be counterproductive.

Power Shifts: Transition and Diffusion

One of the big shifts is the power transition—the movement of power from one set of states to another set. You might see the movement today from west to east. In 1800, more than half of the world’s population and half the world’s product were in Asia. As a result of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and North America, by 1900 this decreased to just 20 percent of the world’s product. Sometime during this century, we’re going to see a return to what you might call normal proportions. Asia will be more than half the world’s population and more than half the world’s product. We’re going to have to figure out how to adjust to it. People may call this the rise of China. Some predict that the rise of China will lead to conflict. It’s really the rise of Asia overall. There are a variety of ways in which we can manage the rise of China within that broader context.

The other great shift is power diffusion, which is the movement of power away from all states—east or west—to non-state or non-governmental actors. It’s basically a function of the extraordinary information revolution that we’re living through right now. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the price of computing power dropped a thousandfold. If the price of automobiles had dropped as rapidly, you could buy a car today for five dollars. When prices go down so dramatically, barriers to entry go down as well. Governments are still important, but the stage on which they act is so much more crowded than ever before.

Exploring Characteristics of Soft and Smart Power

The soft-power dimension grows largely out of a country’s culture and its values; it happens when a country lives up to its values and its policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others. Sometimes a country’s values are attractive, but its policies are, at least temporarily, unattractive. Public diplomacy is important in this area as well. Public diplomacy is the ability to communicate with the populations rather than just the governments of other countries. This can take the classical form of broadcasting. It also can take the form of exchanges, of meeting people and talking, and in some ways exchanges may be more important. Edward R. Murrow, the famous American broadcaster, once said of communicating among humans across vast distances that it’s the last three feet that’s most important—meaning that face-to-face relationship.

Smart power simply means the ability to combine hard and soft power into effective strategies in different contexts. If you



look at the policy statements of the Obama administration, there is a strong desire to integrate the hard-power capacities of the Defense Department and the softer power capacities of the State Department. In 2007, when Secretary of Defense Gates was still in the Bush administration, he went out to Kansas City and gave the Landon speech, in which he said the United States needs to do more with soft power; the military can’t solve all the problems the U.S. faces. When Hillary Clinton became secretary of state, she basically made smart power—using all the tools in the toolbox—a component of her strategy. Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has also talked about the need to use soft power and hard power in combination. These are examples of top leaders who have talked about smart power and are trying to do something about it. The trouble is it’s very hard to overcome decades of institutional inertia. The government in the United States consists of a giant Defense Department and a lot of pygmies in terms of budgetary capacity. That means that trying to integrate programs in State and Defense is not easily done. In addition, given American political culture, it’s very hard to get people to support soft-power investments.

For example, a Congressperson friend of mine said that she agreed with me about soft power. However, it was easy to stand up on the political stump and urge investments in the Defense Department, but very hard to urge investments in the State Department. The net result is that we’re not very well-balanced.

Three-Dimensional Chessboard

No metaphor is perfect, but the three-dimensional chess metaphor reminds people that power always depends on the context and the distribution of power is very different in each context. So power in the military area may be very different from power in the economic or in the transnational area. Let me tell you what I mean. Think of this three-dimensional chessboard with the top board representing military relations among states. In that board the U.S. is the only global superpower. So on the top board people often say the distribution of power in the world is unipolar.

Go to the middle board of economic relations among states, and it's quite clear that the world is multipolar. Economics is the area where Europe can act as one entity when it wishes to, and when it does, its economy is larger than that of the United States. In addition you have China, Japan, and others whom we have to bargain with to get what we want—that's multipolar.

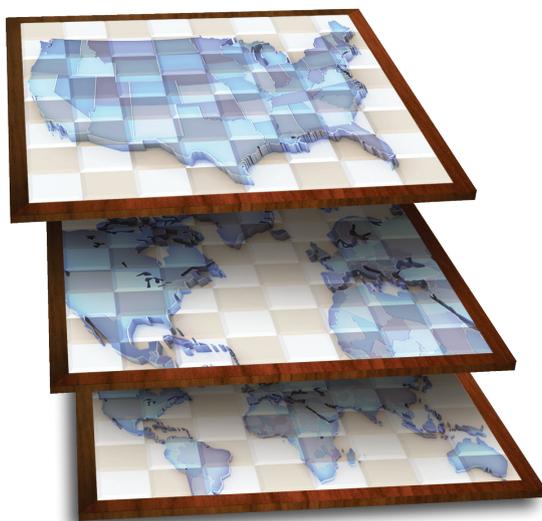
The bottom board represents transnational relations and focuses on issues outside the control of governments: anything from hot money flows, to criminal gangs, to cyberterrorism, to impersonal processes like climate change or pandemics. In this area, power is distributed chaotically. The only way you can get the outcomes you want on this bottom board is by cooperation, by attracting others, by using your soft power to get others to work with you to deal with these types of issues.

We can't deal with many of the problems that we face from this bottom chessboard of transnational relations without the cooperation of others. In that sense, this diffusion of power causes many new threats and challenges that can't be solved by traditional instruments. Sometimes, the United States is a bit like a little boy with a hammer. A little boy with a hammer sees everything in the world as a nail. The United States has a wonderful hammer on the top chessboard of military power, but that doesn't mean that the issues we're dealing with on the bottom chessboard of transnational relations are nails. They're usually quite the contrary. They're amorphous and difficult to hammer.

Converting Power Resources into Strategies

It's very important to talk about the context in which certain resources may or may not produce power. Sometimes people look at the resources that go into producing power and view the resources as power. For example, if one country has 10,000 battle tanks and another country has 1,000 battle tanks, you may deduce that country A is 10 times stronger or more powerful than country B. This may be true if the battle is in a desert, but it may not be true if the battle is in a swamp. The United States found that out in Vietnam. A smart power conversion strategy is one which is able to adjust the various resources and use them in different combinations, within different contexts.

For example, if you ask how we deal with a threat of Al Qaeda terrorism, one argument is to just bomb them.



In today's world, the distribution of power varies with the context. According to Nye, it is distributed in a pattern that resembles a three-dimensional chess game.

- « On the top chessboard, military power is largely unipolar, and the U.S. is likely to remain the only superpower for some time.
- « On the middle chessboard, economic power has already been multipolar for more than a decade, with the U.S., Europe, Japan, and China as the major players, and others gaining in importance.
- « The bottom chessboard is the realm of cross-border transactions that occur outside of government control. It includes diverse non-state actors, such as terrorists, hackers, and new challenges like pandemics and climate change.

However, if you bomb them and in the process you create more civilian casualties than intended, that may increase Al Qaeda's recruiting. Donald Rumsfeld once said the metric for judging how you are doing in a war on terrorism is whether the number that you are killing or deterring is greater than the number they are recruiting. In an effective strategy, you have to have a soft-power component. You have to be able to gain the minds of the mainstream, so that they are not recruited by Al Qaeda. It's interesting if you look at the counterinsurgency strategy of the military as developed by General Petraeus. He makes it very clear that the objective is not how many people you can kill, but how many minds you can win.

Applying Smart Power Strategies

One thing that a smart-power strategy has to pay attention to is the importance of narrative—whose story wins. For example, when President Obama decided whether to intervene in Libya, a primary consideration was what the story was going to be. If he had simply intervened unilaterally with American power, the story would have been, "American imperialists once again attack a Muslim country"—that would have reverberated from Morocco to Indonesia. Instead, Obama did not intervene until he had a resolution from the Arab League and the UN. The story became, "U.S. joins others in intervening in Libya to protect civilians." This gives you a very different type of story, one that benefits U.S. soft power. In addition, Obama was willing to share the lead with the French and British, and make sure that NATO, a multilateral institution, was the operational locus for the activity. This is an example of a smart-power strategy. I don't mean this to be partisan. I cite this example because I think Obama recently carried out a smart strategy in the way he handled his Libyan policy.

Managing the Tension Between Policy and Reality

It is difficult because political leaders, particularly in the House of Representatives, are elected every two years. Let's say Strategy One produces a result now while Strategy Two is more cost-effective but won't produce results until four years from now. If your election is two years from now, you want Strategy One and that's a problem we face in our democracy.

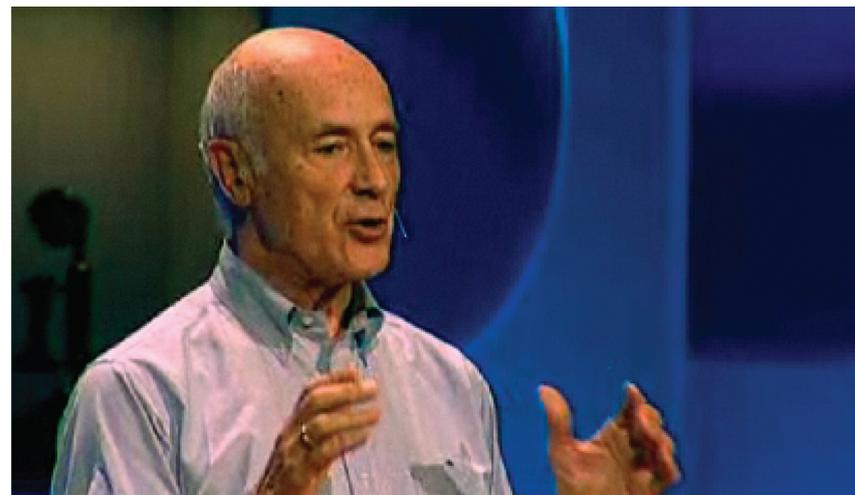
On the other hand, President Eisenhower, who really was a very good foreign policy president, was very clear in this area. He was amenable to things that may not pay off for quite some time, but will ultimately. For example, he supported exchange programs with students from the Soviet Union and the United States. There were many people

opposed to such a program. Eisenhower did it anyway. What's interesting is the Soviets did send KGB agents, but they also sent some people who were crucial in later phases. One of those was a man named Alexander Yakovlev who went to Columbia University in the late 1950s and studied with David Truman, a political scientist who was interested in pluralism. Yakovlev didn't become a defector or stay. He went back home and rose quietly through the ranks. When Gorbachev's generation came to power, Yakovlev was his right-hand man, urging Perestroika and Glasnost. Well, that's quite a return on the investment. I don't know what that scholarship cost back in the 1950s, but I doubt it was much more than \$10,000 or \$20,000 in the [currency] of that day. But [in terms of contributing to] the end of the Soviet Union ... a major objective that cost us billions and billions of dollars ... this was a very good investment.

Importance of Contextual Intelligence

Contextual intelligence is the ability of a leader to understand the proper context of power and realize that power is not the same in all contexts. This is very important in foreign policy. Many a business leader, who is very successful in the hierarchy of a corporation, comes to government and learns that politics in a fishbowl is very different. Understanding different contexts of power is crucial to developing successful strategies. In foreign policy, it means understanding what instruments of power you have—hard and soft—and what type of power will be most effective in a given situation.

I'll take you back to that example I gave of Obama and Libya: thinking through why is it important to have an Arab League resolution, a UN resolution, and waiting to use hard power until you have that and then using your hard power in judicious proportions. This is to me an example of contextual intelligence.



Power in the Cyber Domain

The fascinating thing about power in the cyber domain is there's an extraordinary blurring of what's governmental and nongovernmental. Non-state actors play a much greater role in this domain. For example, let's imagine that one day the electrical grid in the U.S. was down in February and all the pipes were freezing. It was the result of a malicious worm like Stuxnet that recently disrupted the Iranian nuclear centrifuge program. It could be a hostile government, an individual hacker, a criminal gang, or cyberterrorism. Anyone clever enough to do that to us would root their tag in such a way that it would look like it was one of those other potential actors. How do we respond? Where do we send the cruise missile?

It's a very interesting challenge in the cyber domain. You can talk, for example, in oceans or naval policy about supremacy. If you ask, "Does the United States have naval supremacy?" the answer is clearly yes. Now there are non-state actors such as pirates off the coast of Somalia. They do have effects, but they're sort of noise in the system. This doesn't alter the overall conclusion that the U.S. has naval supremacy. It's very hard to know what supremacy means in the cyber domain. While we have enormous capabilities on the offensive side, we also are highly dependent on cyber and therefore more vulnerable. If you can't be sure of who attacked you, whether it's a non-state actor or a government, and you can't figure out how to reply, then it makes it even more difficult to think through what is a successful strategy.

Counterinsurgency Strategies

I think counterinsurgency is an intelligent strategy. What General Petraeus designed makes a lot of sense; instead of measuring your success by how many people you've killed, you measure it by how many minds you've won over. It might be an interesting policy design in terms of combining hard and soft power. The theory is you clear, hold, and build. Clearing and holding is your hard military power. Building includes roads, clinics, and schools and so forth as your soft power. If you're dealing with a culture in which the government is totally corrupt and in which you're not sure whether your aid programs are actually winning or losing people, then it's very hard to implement for cultural reasons.

It's also hard in terms of how long you can stay. Now it may turn out that for every 50 members of a population you need one person who is a member of the security forces. You need them there for a long time. It might turn out that we're just not willing to spend that amount of money and manpower for the decade. In addition to the cultural barriers, cost and



Cpt. Daniel Woodall

Combat engineers and heavy equipment operators with Combat Logistics Battalion 3, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, finalize a bridge construction project in Haji Hanif Khan, Afghanistan.

benefits must be proportionate. One could admire the design of the Petraeus strategy and still raise particular questions in places like Afghanistan or Iraq as to whether it's worth it.

Shaping a New Narrative for the 21st Century

The traditional American narrative of democracy, human rights, and freedom is a pretty good narrative. Ronald Reagan realized this when he adapted the iconography of John Winthrop, the Puritan founder, and talked about a shining city on a hill. In that sense, we can affect others by our example. Our narrative is not just what we say. It's also what we do. President George W. Bush had wonderful rhetoric about a freedom agenda in the 2005 inaugural address. It may have been great for Americans. It wasn't great for the rest of the world because they thought it was inconsistent with our deeds.

For a long time people have talked about liberalism and realism as though they're opposites. Very often, some realists have a rather mechanical view that it means the use of force and balance of power and nothing else. Some liberals have said it means you have more economic interdependence and that you can avoid any conflict. Both perspectives seem simplistic and wrong. When I talk of pragmatic realism I mean realism that starts with understanding the balance of military power, but doesn't stop there.

A good example of this is the way the United States designed its policies toward China and Asia in the Clinton administration. Looking at the situation in the 1990s, as we were designing the East Asian strategy report of 1994 and 1995, we realized there were three major powers in Asia: the U.S., Japan, and China. China was increasing dramatically.

At that time some people said, “Well, the U.S.-Japan security treaty is a Cold War relic. Get rid of it.” We said, “no, on the contrary the U.S.-Japan security treaty can be adapted and strengthened as a basis for stability in a post-Cold War period.” It essentially means that we could help to shape the environment in which Chinese power rises. If the U.S. and Japan stayed together, then in a three-party game, we’re part of the two, not the one, and that’s Basic Realism 101.

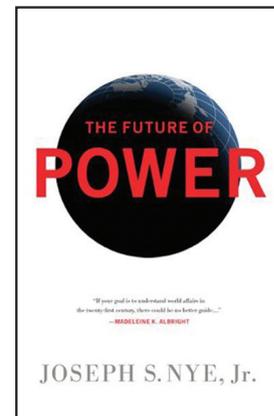
We went beyond that and said, let’s see if China was invited to be a responsible participant in the international system, invite them into the World Trade Organization, accept their goods and their students. It’s very different from Cold War containment, where the U.S. had very little trade and very few students from the Soviet Union. This gives China incentives to essentially shape their behavior in a positive way as they grow. Now how all this will turn out we don’t yet know, but it certainly is a strategy which you might call liberal realism. Liberalism is the incentive for China to integrate into the world system and become what Bob Zoellick later called a responsible stakeholder. The realism part is the hedge. If China does instead become a bully, then essentially we’re in a position to have a response which can help shape China away from that behavior.

Turning Toward the Future Today

We’re going to have to learn to use the instruments of government in a more coordinated fashion. The Department of State and the Defense Department are going to have to work very closely together. There’s wide agreement that a smart-power strategy should rest on this coordinated approach, which is much harder to implement. Secretary of State Clinton added a QDDR, Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, for the State Department, similar to the Defense Department’s QDR, Quadrennial Defense review. It indicates planning towards a broader purpose.



Yet, when it comes to actually getting State and Defense to work together—even with lots of good will at the top of both departments—significant cultural and bureaucratic barriers remain. For example, there was an aid program in Defense which was transferred to State, but when it was transferred, it was cut in half. Clinton and Gates agreed to this transfer, but it was very hard to get Congress and OMB to keep it at the same level when it was transferred. ■



You can listen to the complete interview with Professor Nye by going to www.businessofgovernment.org.

Perspectives on Power, Security, and Leadership with General Anthony Zinni (USMC Ret.) Former Commander of the U.S. Central Command

Military force is typically the bedrock of a nation's power. In today's complex and dynamic world of changing demands, the nature of security requires that it be conceived more broadly than ever before. Some have called for a new, vibrant strategic direction for U.S. national security and foreign policy. Today's context presents a unique set of challenges and requires a new way of thinking about American power, security, and leadership.

*For the U.S. to be an effective world leader, how does it strategically balance all three aspects of its power—defense, diplomacy, and development? What are the strategic threats facing the U.S. today? How can the use of smart power address some of these complex global problems? General Anthony Zinni, former Commander of the U.S. Central Command and author of *Leading the Charge, Leadership Lessons from the Battlefield to the Boardroom*, joined us on *The Business of Government Hour* to provide his perspective on these questions and so much more.*



Aspects of Power in 21st Century World Politics

I think we have to understand how much the world has changed in the last two decades, beginning with the fall of the Soviet Union. It's much more interdependent because of globalization, the rise of information technology, and the migration of peoples.

There have been power shifts. I think we've learned today that military power no longer has the clout it maybe once did. Right now, I think, economic power, social influence, political influence are dimensions of power that may be greater, or at least as great, as the projection of force around the world. We as a nation, the United States, have to learn how to use those other aspects of our power and how to integrate all the elements of power more effectively. I think we have a long way to go. I was impressed with the national security strategy that came out last May, because it

identified the foundation of our national security as education, the economy, and our energy dependence and also as areas we had to work on. What was impressive about it was an acknowledgment that it isn't just projection of influence or power in a military sense. It called for looking internally at the foundations of our own system. I think, in that respect, it's been a major change.

The Peace Dividend and Lost Opportunities

There was a misperception at the time that the world would self-order. After the Cold War and the east-versus-west tensions of over half a century, I think people believed that there would be a sense of relief and that we would now turn away from military spending. There was much hope that there would be regional and global integration of interests and more balance of power and wealth in the world.

None of this really materialized. There were lost opportunities. I think the big mistake was that unlike the end of World War II, where the U.S. provided the resources and strategic guidance that reshaped the world in major ways (e.g., the Marshall Plan) that really didn't happen at the end of the Cold War.

I was in European command at that time. Secretary of State Baker, through Ambassador Richard Armitage, was trying to form a cooperative Marshall Plan for the former Republics of the Soviet Union. I actually was working for Ambassador Armitage at the time trying to make this happen. What impressed me was the lack of interest in this effort from our allies and from us. I think that was an attempt to do something like what Marshall and others did at the end of World War II. It sought to take a fresh strategic look at the world and see how leading and developed nations could best influence positive conditions. Since that didn't occur, the world kind of self-ordered or self-disordered in ways [whose consequences] we face today.

Stabilization and Building Foundations

I think nation-building is the term of art for the overall reconstruction of failed or failing societies, whether capable or incapable. When you really drill down, the way to reconstruct these societies is to rebuild their institutions. In some cases, you either rebuild the institutions or you have to create the necessary political, economic, social, and security institutions. When we use the term nation-building and look

at it overall, it looks too difficult and too expensive. We need to focus on what really needs to happen on the ground, what needs to be done and specifically can be done. More important, we have to rebuild those institutions in a sustainable way. If we attempt to rebuild in our own image and try to make every failed state a Jeffersonian democracy with a free-market economy, we are definitely overstretching.

Importance of the National Security Strategy

The Goldwater-Nichols Act very correctly required the president to release a national security strategy within 150 days, and then every year after that, to revise it or revalidate it at a specific time. It was to be tied to the budget process—supposed to provide the guidance and strategic structure to the budget decisions that went on in Congress. Very few presidents have ever delivered on time or bothered to update it. As a matter of fact, to my shock, very few people in government even read the national security strategy. Decisions are made on funding based on local politics, pet projects, and special interests, not based on a strategic design. Goldwater-Nichols attempted to fix this situation and call for that strategic design.

To the credit of Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, I think they are seriously trying to reduce the defense budget, recognizing the realities of our economic situation. I see us cherry-picking programs, roles, and missions. I don't see us stepping back and saying: let's erase the board and start with the strategic design. Let's define what our military should be and where it should be in the 21st century

Why do we have troops in Germany, Japan, and South Korea? Maybe there are good reasons, but have they been revalidated since they were put there based on old strategies—Carter doctrines, Nixon doctrines, post-World War II or Cold War environments? The component parts of a strategy are to define that vision: where we see our country going and what's our power and purpose in the world.

You have to define our strategic and vital national interests, the partnerships and alliances that mean something to us today. We have to understand how we intend to support these partnerships. We have to define today's threats and how we intend to deal with them. There is no one-size-fits-all answer to all the threats that we face today. Some we may contain and deter. Some we may need to deal with directly. In the recent Obama national security strategy, I was





impressed that we took a look at the foundational internal issues as a beginning, which I think is important. I just look at the involvement in Libya. How did we get thrust into it? What are our vital national interests and objectives? In my view, we backed into it in sort of a knee-jerk fashion. This is what happens when you don't have a strategy.

The most important part of a strategy is to establish priorities. You can't, in this day and age, be all things to all people and meet all needs. So, what is the priority? What are the hard choices you're willing to make? I really don't see this happening today. I think that's what the Goldwater-Nichols Act wanted to achieve. We probably need a greater Goldwater-Nichols Act that allows for more integration of agencies and departments within government. This integration is woefully inadequate. After every crisis—the 9/11

commission and the Homeland Security commission—we complain about the lack of integration and the fixes these commissions recommend seem to just add more bureaucracy. The Goldwater-Nichols Act truly created the right kind of integration. We have failed to do it on a larger scale for the entire government.

Shifting the Emphasis of U.S. Foreign Policy

I think that this has become a significant issue. We can no longer resolve everything with just the military. The military, I think, has been the first to realize this. The battlefields of today are very complex. The military has felt very strongly that we need partners on the battlefield that work the political, economic, social conditions that take place. It used to be that you could handle these sorts of things sequentially—take care of the military business first by defeating the bad guys. Capture the capital, remove the regime, and then get on with reconstruction.

Now, reconstruction begins just as the boots cross the line of departure. Our military does a great job, I think, in being able to handle their part of the action. It's the other parts that are inadequate. Some of that has to do with funding, resources, and organization. Some of it has to do with the culture. The military, for example, are exceptional planners. I don't see that [planning acumen] in the other dimensions [i.e., diplomacy and development]. There's a question of scope and scale. Our military is capable of operating on a large scale and defeating national threats. I don't see that we have the capacity to rebuild societies on that same scale. Even going back to World War II, it was the military fundamentally in Japan and Germany that was saddled with this type of work

We see the failures of the civilian side. I think the Coalition Provisional Authority—the organization that was sent in right after combat action in Iraq—was way undermanned, did not have the competence, or the understanding of the culture, history, planning required to effectively do reconstruction in either Iraq or Afghanistan. When I was a commander at CENTCOM, I was required to build war plans. I don't see the counterpart plans for reconstructing societies after a conflict. As a commander at CENTCOM, I tried to engage other organizations, such as State and USAID, in doing this, and found that they hadn't the resources, the will to engage, the background, or the understanding.



Leadership Crisis

For my last book, I researched what people thought about leadership. I was shocked to find that somewhere around 75 to 80 percent of the American people think we have a crisis in leadership across the board in every element of our society. However, this crisis in leadership is not just in the U.S., but globally. I think the conditions of the 21st century may have led to this crisis, as it's a much more complex and complicated world.

To be competent, you truly have to master a broad field of capabilities. Our leaders are under much greater scrutiny than they have ever been before. Their world has been expanded and a spotlight thrown on it. In many ways this is a good thing, but it also makes it difficult in terms of how leaders have to act.

I think the demands from those we lead are greater today. This is represented by the stresses, changes, and degree to which you have to be far more competent, in so many different areas. It is about the speed that you have to operate in today. It requires quick decisions and mastering information technology; it has made the world much smaller, tighter, and well informed. These changes all have impacted on leadership and I think the old ways of leading won't be effective in this modern world.

Characteristics of a Successful Leader

Successful leaders understand the people they lead. They listen well. They're approachable and value diversity. They

understand that this diversity is more than what you might think of at first; ethnic, racial, or gender diversity. It also comes from other attributes such as a longer-lived workforce. We have many more generations in the workforce than we have had before.

They understand themselves better and are much more self-aware. They seek improvement. They seek coaching and mentoring. The successful leaders don't assume they "get it." They are constantly learning. They are critical thinkers, systems thinkers, and creative thinkers.

Successful leaders today make decisions based on analysis. They recognize patterns. These leaders become more instinctive based on their ability to analyze their experiences and educate themselves. They have a tremendous set of values. They understand the importance of ethics and moral behavior given the scrutiny they are under.

I think value-based institutions and leadership now are more successful. [Leaders] are strategic thinkers. They are visionaries. They look out beyond just the immediate future, the next quarter in business, or the next year or two. They have a place they want to reach in a decade or two. They work the organization to achieve that vision. They're willing to take risks. They'll change organizations. They'll adapt quicker. It's not the old tiered sort of Christmas tree block and wire diagram. They know that type of organization won't work. It's too ponderous, it's too slow. It isn't effective and it's hard to change. They appreciate technology, especially information technology. They understand the environment they're in at present. They aren't what business calls tall, thin people. They don't just work in one narrow area. They constantly expand their field of knowledge, their basis for information, their understanding of the world as they become more senior and move up. They are effective communicators, both internally and externally. They can articulate who they are, what they are, and what they want. These successful leaders work well in crisis and react better in the face of change.

Decision-Making as the Soul of Leadership

The term analysis means breaking down. You have to look at an issue, a problem, and break it down in its parts to understand it. You, then, have to synthesize or rebuild it in a way that's usable to you. You have this type of an approach in order to understand your options. In this, analytical thinking—that ability to look and understand given your experiences, education, and knowledge and piece together the right path—is key.



It's the ability to ask the right questions and tap into the intelligence that's available to you. It's the ability to process something into usable or, the term of art which I really don't like, actionable intelligence. Operational decision-making is different from intelligence. You need both. The intelligence provides you with the understanding. The operational decision-making is where you bring in the wisdom and experience and couple it with a viable intelligence.

Intelligence, as an old great Marine once taught me, is data that's been processed to usable information, that's processed into a better understanding and, then, eventually, to a product of intelligence that makes it very usable for you. Then, eventually, it turns into the wisdom on how to act. Without that sort of process of taking data and moving it to useful intelligence, you aren't going to be able to make those decisions. I think sometimes we think intelligence gives us all the answers. It doesn't

I always tell the story of my director of intelligence when I was in CENTCOM. I called him in one day when I had just taken command and asked him a question. He said, I don't want to answer that question until you tell me what you're going to do with it and why are you asking the question? I said, well, I have four stars, you have two, but what he was saying was absolutely right. I might give you an answer that you might use and apply in the wrong way. If you tell me what you're thinking, why you're asking, I could maybe give you a better answer and actually help you form a better

question. To me, this insight was brilliant. The intelligence side needs to work with the operational side. You cannot make operational or intelligence decisions in isolation.

Reflecting on Goldwater-Nichols Twenty-Five Years Later

I think the brilliance of Goldwater-Nichols is the fact that the integrating element was not simply to set up as a separate bureaucracy. When I was a young major at our headquarters, I worked on Goldwater-Nichols. I remember that the only thing we cooperated with the other service on was to kill Goldwater-Nichols. I couldn't quite understand why. I remember my chief of service telling me, you know, the big fear was, like all government solutions to integration problems, they're going to create what he called a class of mandarins, a separate structure, and more tiers. Look how the intelligence community created the DNI's [Director of National Intelligence] office. Look how Homeland Security was created. Most of the time, when reform is needed and integration is the problem, the answer to integration is to create another structure to add more bureaucracy, and add more tiers. That becomes dysfunctional in the end.



Goldwater-Nichols called for the joint structure to be manned from inside the services. You will serve tours in the joint world. It's going to be a requirement for promotion. By you manning the organization and those people returning to your service, by having senior-level components that are the substantive elements of it, you have representation, you have a voice, and you have a say in the decision-making. There is a senior general or flag officer over a joint staff structure that represents component interests. Those component interests, meaning service interests, are represented in the command at a very senior level.

I watched Goldwater-Nichols and the evolution of the services from the mid-1980s to 2000. I saw us go through three phases. The first phase I would describe as de-confliction. All right, we've got to do this. It's law. We'll agree to disagree in places. We'll carve our own path. But, you know, we'll sort of reluctantly and begrudgingly look at each other. It could be characterized as a very defensive period. We move into the second phase, what I would call the coordination phase, which, I think, really began in the early 90s. We got past simply de-conflicting and realized that we—the services—could actually work together. By the time I retired, I saw true integration. We didn't think in terms of Army,

Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Special Operations. We thought in terms of capabilities. The integration Goldwater-Nichols mandated offers a good model for how other federal agencies [might collaborate].

Reflecting on the Intelligence Community

There is not a lack of capability in our intelligence community. We certainly have enough organizations within it. I would say there's a lack of integration of those organizations. There is a lot of parochialism, which I think people in the business understand and see every day. Over six-plus years, we are on our fifth DNI, (Director of National Intelligence) which is confusing.

We're still debating authority over people and resources. The first problem is one of true integration and true understanding. I don't think there's anybody in Washington that really understands the totality of the intel community and what all its component parts are, where they are, and what they do. I don't think we understand the resources put toward it—whether sufficient or insufficient. I may be overly critical, but I think we have to be honest about how our intelligence in many ways has failed us in recent times. Iraq is a good example.

We can go through the litany of problems and issues in this area. The intelligence system needs to stop being a top-down organization. If you go back and do the forensics on 9/11, there was enough out there to know something was up. Why didn't the bottom-up system work? The answer to everything always seems to be more bureaucracy, but that's not the answer. I am always suspect when a problem and its solution result in only organizational change, as opposed to recognizing the cultural, philosophical, or process-focused implications that I think are important in how to look at things.

I also think the people who make decisions may not understand how to use intelligence. Intelligence is not just the provision of information. [More important], those that analyze and develop intelligence have to be part of the decision-making process. They have to understand what the leader is trying to do, what the leader needs, and ultimately what the leader intends. I am not sure we analyze against intentions. We analyze against highly specific questions and requirements. I think this is the biggest mistake we make. Director Tenet, when he wanted to come down to the U.S. Central Command, said ... "Tony, when I come down there, I want you to brief me." I thought, what am I going to brief

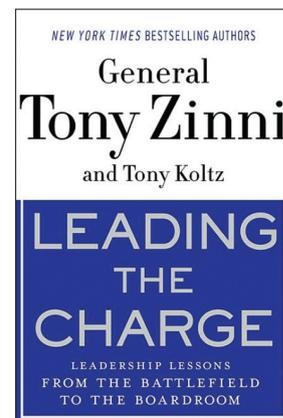


George Tenet on? He said, 'I see all the analysis. I see all the intelligence, but I need context.' To me that was a brilliant observation on his part.

If you don't understand Islam, the desert, its colonial history, or haven't been to these places, talked to these people, read these books, you won't have context. All you'll have are facts, possibly some analysis, but without context it's all meaningless.

Looking Ahead

Not since the 1947 National Security Act have we had a major restructuring of our government to look at the world today and face its challenges better prepared, better organized, and more intelligently resourced. We need that again and it needs to be bipartisan. This new world requires a different approach, but we're still following legacy strategies from the Cold War and even World War II. We have old organizations that aren't responsive and don't appreciate changes in the world such as globalization, the rise of information technology, and all the other things that have changed the world into what it is today. ■



You can listen to the complete interview with General Zinni by going to www.businessofgovernment.org.