

Interagency Approach to Achieve Integrated Deterrence

by Matthew T. Ventimiglia, Frank J. Klimas and Kevin W. Siegrist

The threats to national security as articulated in the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance (INSSG) have not changed since the 2018 National Security Strategy (NSS). However, the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) will execute the strategy in a new way known as integrated deterrence. The Pentagon issued a fact sheet explaining the Department of Defense (DoD) will advance national strategy goals in three ways: integrated deterrence, campaigning, and actions that build enduring advantages. Integrated deterrence combines the United States' best efforts to maximum effect across warfighting domains, the spectrum of conflict, and other instruments of national power to strategic effect.¹

President Biden stated that the military would not be the leading instrument of power in

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foreign policy in the INSSG, meaning that unified action will harness the three remaining tools in a manner that has not been achieved in the recent past.² The president's approach to strategic action is illustrated in the current conflict in Ukraine. Instead of leading with military action of U.S. forces confronting Russian forces far from home, other tools of the United States' national power have been employed; diplomatic lead by unifying NATO, economically enacted sanctions against Russia, informed and rallied other nations to support sanctions as well as enact their own, and counter Russian disinformation and military deception *before* it could be released to open sources. Congress passed legislation for the President's signature granting aid to Ukraine in the form of funding, military equipment, weapons, and ammunition. The military contribution provided targeting, intelligence, and training to Ukraine's forces from *outside* the war zone. In short, a strategic effect was employed against Russia that was synchronized across the agencies of the government using the instruments of national power, and most importantly it reduced the risk and expense of committing American lives allowing this resource to remain ready for other tasks. While not yet complete, U.S. action in response to the conflict in Ukraine is a sound example of integrating all instruments of national power. The U.S. tends to do this best in crisis. It must learn from recent events so it can apply the same integrated effects proactively to achieve deterrence and be effective at campaigning and building enduring advantages.

The twenty-first century great power competition requires an innovative approach to strategic problems. As seen in the above example, integrating the instruments of national power has never been more critical to the national security of the U.S. than it is today, but it may also be the most challenging part of the NDS to implement. With the speed at which information exchanges, fostering the conditions for increased gray zone

conflict and greater influence by non-state actors, proactive integration of all instruments of national power through improved interagency coordination is essential to advance national security. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the pacing challenge for the U.S. not only in the Indo-Pacific but in every combatant command (CCMD) around the world. Checking PRC expansion in the Indo-Pacific requires a multinational military effort, but building the coalition demands more than military forces organized around opposition to China's military. For integrated deterrence to work, all instruments of national power - diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) - need to be consistently synchronized in coordinated strategic action across the government to deter PRC expansion and activities, respond to disinformation, and apply economic pressures. However, the interagency in its current state is not agile enough to implement the full-court press needed in integrated deterrence. Current interagency organizations and authorities are not optimized for a whole-of-government approach to achieve integrated deterrence as articulated by the National Defense Strategy.

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This article does not seek to redefine the entire relationship of the interagency with the combatant commanders (CCDRs) but limits its scope to close the coordination gap among U.S. Government agencies enabling DIME influences in support of integrated deterrence. While JP 3-08 defines interagency as "Of or pertaining to United States Government agencies and departments, including DoD", we define interagency in this paper as the federal

government organizations and departments that coordinate the instruments of national power (DIME) resulting in a whole-of-government effect. The intent of our research is to increase cooperation amongst agencies in harmony with a single strategy, as opposed to departmental perspectives and silos, to implement a cohesive system to enable coordinated action at lower levels. Looking through a lens of doctrine, authorities and organization, and culture, this article analyzes challenges to interagency coordination and proposes actionable recommendations.

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Doctrine

As of the writing of this article, regarding the conflict in Ukraine, Russia has re-examined its strategy to identify what aspects of its instruments of national power (in addition to military action) can effectively achieve the desired end state. Russia is capitalizing on its ability to manage information and its economy while balancing diplomacy to regroup and gain momentum to continue operations against Ukraine.³ China's ongoing expansion and worldwide influence rely heavily on the whole-of-government approach to meet its strategic objectives resulting in significant growth of economic power and influence. Defined in the 2022 NDS (and implied in the 2021 Interim NSS), the requirement for interagency cooperation and a whole-of-government approach is necessary to achieve integrated deterrence against the great powers of Russia and China to ensure the strategic objectives of security, prosperity, and the American way of life are met.

While the challenges outlined above have been studied at length, the impact of less-than-

optimal interagency operations on our national security is heightened in our strategy's new, integrated deterrence approach. The interagency tends to work best during crises when priorities are clear; and focus is strong. There are many references to interagency cooperation in several Joint Publications, but two dedicated doctrinal publications the DoD uses to operationalize its interoperability among U.S. Government federal workforces are Joint Publication 3-08 (JP 3-08), *Interorganizational Cooperation*, and a supplement to that volume the *Joint Guide for Interagency Doctrine*. Both documents discuss civilian government agencies and non-governmental organizations the military might team up with in crisis operations and parts of the government that can support or enable military operations in domestic and international operations. Both documents also articulate strategic direction documents like the NSS and NDS that help frame whole-of-government cooperation. Doctrine provides a common language, a framework, that enables organizations to improve their planning and coordination. However, this commonality is typically within a department, not between departments, as highlighted by the 1,700 pages of interagency definitions in the United States Government Compendium of Interagency and Associated Terms.⁴ Continuing to use the two most prominent players in foreign policy and security as an example of the challenges associated with interagency coordination, the DoD and the State Department, there are urgent reasons to improve the synchronization between those doctrines, especially in the areas of planning and logistics to increase efficiency and unity of effort. Doctrine tends to orient the organization toward operationalizing its strategy. DoD joint doctrine allows the different services to speak a more common language resulting in a better shared understanding and force employment to achieve national objectives. It's time for that same concept to take hold between

the interagencies.

The current DoD joint doctrine on interagency coordination is written to enable civilian agencies to support a CCDR's efforts to solve a specific problem in a defined contingency for a limited amount of time. It does exactly what it is designed to do, but interagency coordination in integrated deterrence needs something different. For example, JP 3-08 provides a framework for military leaders and staff to work within the framework of a whole-of-government approach. The doctrine specifically addresses interagency coordination and planning, including an organizational structure of the Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATF) as an element for coordination and planning. The military's joint doctrine for interagency coordination still ties the responsibilities back to a CCMD as the lead, in coordination with the ambassadors and the country teams. DoD leads the interagency in implementing doctrine and mandatory professional military education; however, for integrated deterrence to work, the rest of the interagency needs to develop complementary interagency doctrine and increase its training and education.

Authorities and Organization

The president is the central authority to implement a whole-of-government approach to achieve strategic direction. Congress also has a role in strategic action through budgeting and granting of authorities through legislation. Still, integrated deterrence starts with and is led by the president, who is advised by the National Security Council (NSC) in accordance with the authorities granted by law. These authorities and responsibilities are specified in Title 22 of the U.S. Code (Foreign Relations) for the DoS and Title 10 U.S. Code (Armed Services) and further defined in the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for the DoD. The NSC's authority is contained in Title 50 U.S. Code (War and National Defense), chapter 44

(National Security), Subchapter I (Coordination for National Security). The National Security Directive (NSD) allows the president to organize the desired council for advice on policy and implementation and reflects much of how the NSC is structured. The "NSC system performs two distinct functions; advising the president in regard to national security matters and assisting the president in integrating domestic, foreign, and military policies to achieve national security objectives."⁵ In other words, the president organizes and tasks the council based on his or her own preferences for national security versus domestic policy. The president even has the authority to reorganize the NSC as President Obama did in 2009 by merging the Homeland Security Council and NSC into a single National Security Staff, but this was returned to the present configuration in 2014.⁶

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The NSC normally consists of senior members of departments and agencies having effect on U.S. national security, but it is a wholly political organ that can be contentious despite the close relationship senior members might have with the president because pressures from their agencies can influence the dialog. Over the decades, the NSC structure has adapted to the desires of the presidents with one key challenge facing political appointee members of the NSC as they have "the responsibility to ensure that the president's guidance is adhered to, and they are the department's or agency's champion to Congress and the White House. If they wish to be respected in their department or agency, they must challenge the president. If they wish to be trusted by the president, they must challenge their department or agency."⁷ The NSC advises the president on forming policy and carries out decisions. The organizational structure of the

NSC system uses several committees and sub-committees, such as the Interagency Policy Committees (IPC) for policy implementation. The IPCs “provide policy analysis for consideration by the more senior committees of the NSC system and ensure timely responses to decisions made by the President.”⁸

The two models for the NSC system are the presidential and secretarial models, which determines if the president leads the NSC system or delegates the leadership to the Secretary of State.⁹ This matters in whole-of-government effectiveness. The president often leads crisis management, so the council serves as the de facto lead element of the interagency. However, the Department of State is the lead department for foreign policy and “the secretary is the principal representative of U.S. policies to foreign and

its implementation.”¹¹ The national strategy will have a stronger effect if it is synchronized across the government, and while the NSC has influence in decision-making it cannot control all the tools of national power effectively. The president is the only person who can prioritize and re-prioritize efforts for the executive branch and seek authorities from the legislative branch, and integrated deterrence cannot reach its full whole-of-government effects without improving coordination in the interagency below the NSC level. The agencies and their action officers need to understand each other’s capabilities and processes to work together better.

The State Department is the lead for foreign policy as discussed earlier, but over the past two decades those authorities and responsibilities shifted from the State Department to DoD through the CCMDs. The Defense Department usurped all other national tools of DIME because CCMDs controlled vast resources that could be quickly deployed, sustained, and controlled. More importantly, the CCMDs exercised national strategy through a regionally-focused mindset. “This trend underlies a significant expansion of DoD direct engagements with foreign security forces and an accompanying increase in DoD’s role in foreign policy decision-making.”¹² Unless the interagency takes tangible steps to better work together, the differences between the DoD and the State Department implementation of foreign policy will continue to grow over time, making a whole-of-government approach more challenging to implement. The primacy of DoD may in part be resource driven but it could also be process driven. “Abroad, [the State Department] leads at the country level under the authority of the ambassador through the country team, while Defense leads at the regional level under the authority of the CCDR.”¹³ This could be an indication that military power took the lead in foreign policy because it was the instrument of national power best structured and process-driven to translate effects from national strategy

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domestic audiences, chief negotiator, and chief executive officer charged with the long-term health of the department.”¹⁰ The Secretary of State has more effect in diplomacy-led efforts but lacks the executive control of the president for action across the entire federal government. Regardless of which model the president prefers in the NSD, this places the State Department as the lead agency for interagency coordination in foreign policy. Secretaries of other agencies designated to meet national strategy requirements are aligned with the Secretary of State on the NSC, but “only the president sits atop of the departments and agencies of government, and the national security council system [is] the president’s principal mechanism for achieving a unifying national security policy and overseeing

down to host-nation agency level. The State Department is currently not organized to achieve the same effects. "One ambassador lost his job when he tried to exert control over drone strikes from the country in which he served as the president's personal representative."¹⁴ Along with authorities for regional coordination and conflicting agency agendas within country teams, the different organizational layouts between the two largest departments that implement foreign policy result in additional challenges. "Country-by-country execution of foreign policy by U.S. ambassadors may not always be the most effective or successful approach," due to the complicated nature of how state, humanitarian, and economic issues often cross sovereign boundaries.¹⁵ Clearly, the DoD has power projection beyond anything the State Department can provide, but without properly formed and implemented strategic policies and documents, military power is the wrong tool for the job. The State Department leads the president's foreign policy portfolio, but diplomatic soft power can be outgunned by the speed and capacity of military hard power. The country-by-country focus of one department compared to the geographical focus of another is discordant. "The center of gravity for State Department-DoD interaction is with the geographic and functional CCMDs," equates to a lack of a common effort for whole-of-government understanding within the U.S. and in coordination with allies.¹⁶ For the DoD to advance its goals as stated in the 2022 NDS fact sheet using integrated deterrence, the department must coordinate all instruments of national power at the interagency level to better work together. To achieve that goal, they will need to have more people in their ranks who understand each other's processes and missions and standardize where they can.

Another key indicator of issues facing the U.S. government's ability to effectively operate under the umbrella of whole-of-government policy is how the budget is not mutually

supportive to resource policy. One of the key hindrances to ideal interagency coordination is that each agency fights for as many dollars as it can for its agency and budget priorities are not always synchronized with national strategy across the interagency. CCDR influence grew, especially Special Operations Command as steady-state operations increased over time, "as we fought the war on terror primarily in

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military operations with little oversight or control by individual chiefs of mission or State as DoD's security cooperation authorities were ... significantly modified in the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)."¹⁷ Pooling the resources for some foreign policy instruments across the interagency would incentivize collaboration (and value it in dollars). Former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, attempted to reinforce the State Department as the lead to gain efficiency toward a common understanding. Doing so

"would involve pooled funds set up for security capacity building, stabilization, and conflict prevention. Both the State Department and the Defense Department would contribute to these funds, and no project could move forward without the approval of both agencies... it would create incentives for collaboration between different agencies of the government, unlike the existing structure and processes left over from the Cold War, which often conspire to hinder true whole-of government approaches."¹⁸

It was not until Goldwater-Nichols that the DoD began to embrace the significance of joint

operations in earnest because of the forcing mechanism of law. Aligned with secretaries who have competing demands of policy between the NSC supporting the President and their respective departments, competing budgets for departments also do not instill a unifying desire to achieve whole-of-government solutions for implementing the president's NSS through integrated deterrence.

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Culture

As we analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the present-day interagency system, we understand that the cultures of governmental departments have shaped how strategy is executed more than any single factor. It is also interesting to note that oftentimes how a department is organized and funded can influence its culture. It is well known that each organization in the interagency has its own culture and that often these cultural differences challenge coordination. One example of an organization influencing cultural differences is between the DoD and the State Department regarding command and control (C2). Individual nation-state sovereignty drives the state-by-state nature of much of our foreign diplomacy, while the unified command plan and the nature of war drive regional military responsibilities. Particularly at the tactical and operational level, the DoD is better oriented toward regional matters whereas the State Department is better oriented toward nation-state matters. While also discussing organization in culture may appear redundant due to earlier discussion in authorities and organization, the cultural issue is that these differences often manifest themselves in modestly separate ways of approaching and thinking about problems.

“The risk today—in a policy context defined by great power competition—is that we will revert to prioritizing country-specific policies, however well-intentioned, without seeing the bigger picture. China sees the big picture. So does the U.S. military’s geographic command structure. “One Middle Eastern embassy’s integrated country strategy is no match for Central Command’s theater campaign plan.”¹⁹ While these cultural differences are often a source of friction, we must embrace the friction and strive to build teamwork at the tactical and operational levels. Another source of friction is that a growing number of the non-DoD interagency personnel have little to no experience working with the military. Ambassador Larry Butler, a veteran foreign service officer and former chief of mission, explained in a recent interview that the relationship between DoD and State Department action officers has much room for improvement saying, “you can’t surge trust if you don’t have it.”²⁰ Increased exposure among the interagency can help build this trust and make our differences a strength vice weakness.

The last part of the culture challenges we want to address is the professional development tied to each department’s ability to address interagency coordination. Departments need to have cultures that enable them to speak common languages and value the necessity of professional development and an understanding to work together through planning, a shared understanding, and shared goals. Butler’s *Creeping Foreign Policy Militarization or Creeping State Department Irrelevance?* offers recommendations to attend training with DoD service schools, changing the Foreign Service Officer promotion system to reward military assignment, and advises chiefs of mission to visit the U.S. military headquarters in their countries (division, corps, and HHQ) if they exist. The military has a great infrastructure to educate, and importantly the education includes the areas of diplomacy, instruments of national

power, and other high-level non-military centric topics which are critical to understand interagency coordination. Since the DoD has the most capacity among the interagencies in education, the interagency should look to further utilize this resource by increasing attendance and the DoD reciprocates where there are resources and opportunities. Increasing education will not only improve synchronization across the interagency, but it will also serve as a foundation for consistent strategic decision-making that incorporates all instruments of national power.

Recommendations

We primarily attacked recommendations that did not require significant organizational change because 1) previous efforts appear to have fallen short due to the scope being too large, 2) actual implementation is more likely with simple recommendations, and 3) we recognize that change will only reduce the cultural biases within each department/agency, it will not eliminate it. Our recommendations put most of the responsibility on the DoD because 1) DoD is the only department with Title 10 responsibilities, 2) the DoD budget, manning, and resources provide some flexibility for reallocation to achieve end states, and 3) its doctrine is a key part of its culture and already addresses interagency planning and coordination.

Using the lens of doctrine, authorities and organizational structures, and culture, we assessed the strengths and challenges of our current foreign policy processes through the combination of agencies and departments working together to achieve a common goal. The power of the American government and people is unsurpassed when brought together towards a common objective, such as how the government was transformed into a national response to the September 11th attacks and how the government was united in response in support of Ukraine. That common objective is defined and articulated by the President in the INSSG. The operational

environment of today's world reinforces the need for the American government to make a change and to stay relevant in an ever-changing environment. Previous recommendations as mentioned in the 2014 Atlantic Council article, have included multiple steps across departments and agencies, and while sound recommendations, they have proven difficult to implement.²¹ In our recommendations we capitalize on the current system and organizations to increase the feasibility of the changes being implemented. Each department or agency has a part of this solution, but the DoD is particularly invested as it spends the most dollars and lives when interagency policy is not optimized. Among the recommendations, due to size and budget, there is a common, intentional theme of bringing the DoD to the interagency. This is intended to increase the feasibility and urgency of process improvement.

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Our recommendations

The first recommendation is to align each department and agency's strategy to the INSSG, to include how it will integrate with other instruments of national power which will synchronize prioritization across the interagency. This must be done proactively instead of waiting for the next national crucible event to make effective change.

Next, each department or agency shall establish clear guidance and mechanisms to affect interagency doctrine that standardizes training, planning, and execution, the foundations of which shall be common through the departments and agencies that employ instruments of national power.

Focusing on the effectiveness of people, the next recommendation is to fund and highly

value (i.e. through promotions) professional military education of sister departments and agencies with DoD taking the lead and having the authority to enforce this requirement. There is already some cross-training between departments, but currently, outside of Special Operations Command, it is often ineffective and minimal.

The next recommendation is for the interagency to establish an interagency internship program to make cultural differences an asset. The focus on internships or liaison officers compared to the few current full exchange assignments is because an internship or liaison officer can be targeted with immediate reinvestment when returned to their parent department. These would be nominally one year, at the same location as the current assignment, and related to a current job or future position within the parent department to build an appreciation for other instruments of national power brought to bear prior to and during conflict. DoD should lead by sending DoD to the other agencies due to its capacity and requirement to understand the interagency culture to achieve security objectives.²² The shorter duration, compared to a full interagency assignment, also increases interagency exposure without a change in manpower. Even increasing much shorter interagency engagements such as the Preparation of the Environment course (at U.S. Special Operations Command) and the Interagency Communications Course (Joint Special Operations Command) will have high return on investment in bridging our cultures to increase teamwork.

Furthermore, in all interagency operations, clear and concise memorandums of agreement need to be drafted to articulate supported and supporting relationships to provide the structure required for sound execution. This adds structure and clarity within the interagency but also provides adaptability and flexibility to adjust to the problem and operating environment.

A more systematic approach would be for the CCMD to have a way to influence the other parts of national power at a more senior level. The current structure at each CCMD has a permanent Political Advisor (POLAD) and interagency working groups, such as JIATFs, which are temporary in nature and limited in scope to address interagency coordination. To achieve this more permanent and higher level of interagency coordination, we recommend implementation of the structure shown in Figure 1 (page 27) at the CCMD which was recommended in “All Elements of National Power” from 2014. The organization under the civilian deputy is akin to a standing JIATF, to facilitate proactive integrated deterrence and merely reactive crisis response.

Embracing strategic effects using the instruments of national power is exercised through the CCMD does not seek to duplicate efforts, nor does it superintend keeping the DoD the dominant agency of foreign policy but seeks to strengthen the best attributes of the military C2 systems and philosophies. In this way, integrated deterrence is a combatant command-level activity enabling decentralized execution of strategic effects. For example, the strategic influences of Russia and China are not confined to U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) respectively. These two countries have presence in every CCMD around the globe. A good example of this is U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM). Here, Russia has a legacy of activities from the Soviet Union’s support of communist regimes and China’s growth in economic and defense ventures now exceeds that of the United States. USAFRICOM’s decentralized execution of integrated strategic effects through all domains of DIME supported by USEUCOM and USINDOPACOM are coordinated through the interagency coordination authorities in all three commands. This enables agile strategic action in the field yet still allows

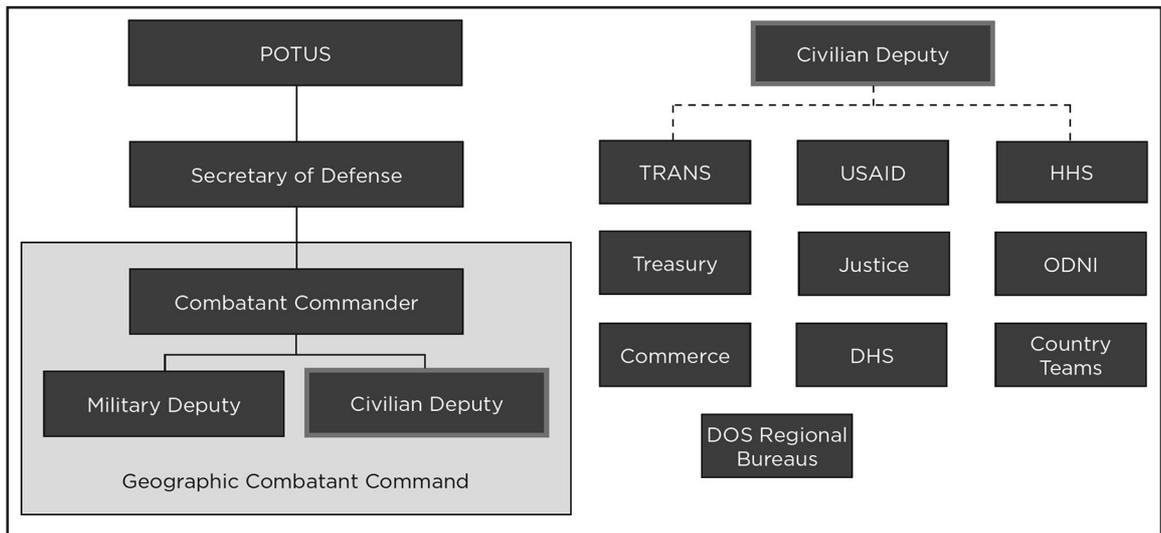


Figure 1. Recommended Restructuring Option: Coordination Authority²³

C2 from the NSC.

To ensure that the INSSG is implemented across the interagency, these proposed recommendations must be enforced through the budget and law. We must hold ourselves accountable through budget apportionment in the areas of every department’s doctrine and professional education, interagency exchange, and promotion incentives if we are to effectively execute a whole-of-government approach.²⁴ A portion of each agency’s budget shall be allocated for interagency teaming education and proper execution is required to receive the money. Enforcement via law establishes requirements for who and how many members of each agency receive the education while linking it to mandatory career progression. Furthermore, departments would be required to provide a semi-annual tactical level debrief and a quadrennial strategic level debrief on organizational execution to Congress to establish interagency accountability and institutional learning. If we do not keep score (via these debriefs) in the attempts at continuous process improvement among the interagency, future leaders will continue to discuss these problems for the decades to come and we’ll be challenged to effectively implement our national strategy.

Conclusion

The evidence shows one perspective of a complicated issue. The interagency organizations and authorities, most of which focus on domestic affairs, are not prepared to implement the whole-of-government effort needed to deter Russia and China. Integrated deterrence as articulated by the current NDS is backstopped by our nuclear forces, but running to the backstop leaves no good choices.

While these challenges have been studied at length, the impact of less-than-optimal interagency operations on our national security is heightened in our new, integrated deterrence strategy. The current way of civilian and military integration through interagency coordination groups and military-led JIATFs needs to be aligned to the new strategy to face the twenty-first century threats and great power competition. The interagency comes together to work best during a crisis when priorities are clear, and focus is strong.

With the reasonable adjustments outlined here, focusing on organizational and culture improvements enforced through budget, we can achieve crisis level interagency effects proactively, ahead of conflict. **IAJ**

Notes

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- 22 Interview with Ambassador Larry Butler, May 5, 2022.
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