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## Forward Perspectives

### Uniting Foresight and Policy in Governance

We received a great deal of positive feedback on our article last month on foresight in government, which mentioned that IAF futurists Clem Bezold and Jonathan Peck joined a panel on July 30 on that topic held in conjunction with the Project on National Security Reform's (PNSR) book launch of its *Vision Working Group Report and Scenarios*. In this month's newsletter, we have decided to explore the issue of foresight in government in greater detail, and to share some of the learning from that panel.



As we look toward the future, it is pretty easy to forecast the failure of governance and economic and social systems. What people find harder to forecast is a successful future that we take so seriously that it commands our attention and action right now. Vision and foresight offer the means to meet this difficult challenge. With creativity and hope, we can restore public faith in government and we can make the 21st century better than the 20th for people around the world.

What would that surprisingly successful future look like? For one thing, our government would be the first place where bright young people would want to work. Also, the integration of our government, businesses, and NGOs would provide new strategies and solutions to the 21st century's biggest problems. In this scenario, the dreamers would work alongside the doers.

As the PNSR panel considered their vision for a successful future, they also offered steps the government could take to institutionalize the foresight required to achieve it. Leon Fuerth, former national security advisor to Vice President Al Gore and research professor at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, presented at the event. Also, he wrote the précis and introduction for *Vision Working Group Report and Scenarios*. The following is an excerpt of his remarks:



We need to find a way to organize foresight so it connects to every state of the policy process. This adaptation needs to occur while the system continues to operate and even as our political system carries on in the absence of foresight. We can take steps to organize foresight in the executive and we can also have a parallel ability in Congress.

There are pragmatic ways to proceed on the executive foresight agenda without having to go to Congress. The way it works now is that the White House staff is organized to work with the legacy systems of government – parallel, independent hierarchies that often compete with each other. However a cross-cutting and integrated cabinet design would change the way government works for the better. Our Cabinet today is a photo op rather than a true coordinating body that brings situational knowledge to the President.

Another opportunity for better coordination and integration: Today there are 37 people known by the misnomer of Czar who are scattered across the government. A system of laterally defined authorities could convert these Czars into a better functioning knowledge network of what is going on that works across as well as up and down government. This is doable and manageable. Our destiny as a country is defined by the challenge to think long term while we act short term.

The National Strategy for Security could be designed to serve as the basis for congressional oversight. But how would a government thinking holistically and acting thematically work with a Congress organized by Committee? Congress could clean up its own act to deal with complex legislation. A component level of policy with designs that work in progression by looking forward and analytically working backward could work. This can be done under existing rules.

We need to do this, and it is doable. We are in a hole that is getting deeper. We are being out-thought by our rivals. The need is present and the systems are manageable. We need a replacement for a system designed for a world that no longer exists and we need a new system designed for a world that is emerging. We have to learn to legislate on a systems basis.

During his presentation, Clem Bezold spoke about how to systematically encourage foresight in Congress. A summary of his proposal is provided below:



The report of the Project on National Security Reform highlights the importance of foresight in responding to an unpredictable world. Under House Rule X, every standing committee (except Appropriations) has the authority and responsibility to conduct “future research and forecasting on subjects within its jurisdiction” ( <http://rules.house.gov/ruleprec/111th.pdf>, page 11, under General Oversight Responsibilities).

This House Foresight Provision has been in existence for the last 15 Congresses, but little is known about the extent to which, if at all, committees comply with this requirement. Presumably it is implemented in multiple formal and informal ways, but here are recommendations for how to systematically encourage House committee foresight:

- Have each committee and subcommittee develop an oversight and foresight agenda at the beginning of each Congress.

To be effective, each committee or subcommittee must identify potential challenges to the assumptions underlying the policies under their jurisdiction. For example, are there or will there be changes in the context that current policy and legislation assume? Are there or will there be emerging issues that change the nature of the problem or how we address it through policy? Answers to these questions would help identify trends and key forces with the greatest potential impact and the highest levels of uncertainty. The results of this discussion could determine the topics where early warning information, hearings, or research are needed by or for the committee.

- Include forecasts and scenarios in committee orientation, retreats and policy sessions.

Using these tools would help committee members, staff, and key interest groups focus on the future sooner rather than later, on multiple occasions, and on a consistent basis. Using early warning information, committees could develop forecasts and scenarios of the future of the policy area looking out 10, 20 or more years. Scenarios are useful for monitoring trends and changes and would enable committee members to test the “robustness” of current policies and regulation in the face of different future circumstances.

- Include foresight questions in requests to Congressional Support Organizations, e.g. the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congressional Research Service (CRS), National Academy of Sciences (NAS), and Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

Congress relies on these support organizations for information and analysis. By asking these organizations foresight questions, Congress could ensure that a focus on the future is embedded in their research and analysis.

- When dealing with agencies or reviewing policy areas or specific programs, ask for forecasts of key factors, potential surprises, or emerging opportunities that might alter the current approach.

Scanning for trends and changes is best performed on a recurring basis to provide early warning of emerging threats and opportunities. Existing policy approaches should be tested against forecasts and scenarios developed once every few years. Similarly, quadrennial reviews and other periodic assessments should include forecasts or scenarios of future conditions relevant to the policy environment.

- Have scenarios on a given topic or area covered by multiple committees or a group

consisting of members from multiple committees.

Areas within the jurisdiction of several committees can be affected by similar future trends. For instance, scientific discoveries could affect transportation, energy, and housing; thus, committees and subcommittees with jurisdiction over these areas should be able to share technology-focused scenarios.

- Where disagreement over scenarios is likely, consider having majority and minority scenarios prepared.

By looking further into the future, scenarios bring together groups from opposite sides of the political aisle. Where this is not feasible, having scenarios prepared by the majority and the minority on the committee can help make explicit their respective assumptions, challenges, and opportunities.

Taken together, the speakers and members of the vision working group have both established an inspiring vision for governance and offered the first steps to achieve it.

## News & Events

### Project on National Security Reform (PNSR) Releases Book on Foresight and Visioning in Government

The Vision Working Group, headed by Dr. Sheila R. Ronis and part of the Project on National Security Reform, recently released *Vision Working Group Report and Scenarios*. The book describes the Group's efforts to stress test the solution sets proposed in *Forging a New Shield* (2008) for preparing the national security system to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Results of the stress test revealed that each of the five broad sets of recommendations improved the performance of the current system; however on the whole, the findings concluded that the national security system is at risk of failure and needs serious reform. Consequently, the work of the Vision Working Group has led to the formulation of another recommendation: The country must establish a mechanism to infuse greater foresight into the Executive Branch, and in particular the national security system. This proposed mechanism, named the Center for Strategic Analysis and Assessment, would exist and operate within the Executive Office of the President. *Vision Working Group Report and Scenarios* details the proposed architecture and operation of the Center.

Download the report or order a free hardcopy through the Strategic Studies Institute: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubid=1002>.

*Forging a New Shield* is available through PNSR's website: <http://www.pnsr.org/web/page/682/sectionid/579/pagelevel/2/interior.asp>.

### Notre Dame Business School Introduces Foresight as a Requirement for Undergraduates

*More and more universities are including foresight in their curriculum. There are 18 futures or foresight graduate programs around the world, and many other schools or centers that offer courses on futures or foresight. A list of these programs and institutions is available under Projects at John Smart's & Shaping Tomorrow's Foresight Education & Research Network, [www.fernweb.org](http://www.fernweb.org). A list of foresight programs around the globe is also available at the Acceleration Studies Foundation website, <http://accelerating.org>.*

*Business schools are adding more explicit foresight offerings as well. In the Washington DC area, American University business Professor Erran Carmel offers a foresight course. The University of Maryland is developing offerings as well. However the first undergraduate business school we are aware of that requires all business majors to take a foresight course is the University of Notre Dame. Here is how they describe it:*

In 2009, the University of Notre Dame Mendoza College of Business introduced a new course, Junior Research Challenge: Foresight in Business and Society. The purpose of this required course is to take



a bold step forward in business education by introducing all junior-level students to a futurist's perspective into societal issues and their impact on business.

"You cannot lead if you don't know what is coming at you, and where the opportunities for growth are," said Carolyn Y. Woo, Martin J. Gillen Dean of the Mendoza College, who developed the initial vision of the course based on feedback from senior business executives who viewed foresights skills as essential for the next generation of business leaders. "Foresight in Business and Society exposes students to trends and helps them develop critical assessment skills, so they can understand the actions necessary for solving the big-picture issues."

The course begins with an exploration of major emerging challenges, including sustainability, population growth, climate change, and issues caused by changing demographics. Student teams are required to conduct an in-depth analysis of a specific topic to assess change, trends, expected and alternative futures, and business implications for achieving positive outcomes. Each team creates an extensive futures research report which is presented at the end of the semester.

The Mendoza College of Business at Notre Dame is the first business school to require this type of course as part of its core curriculum. Professors Sam Miller, Suzanne Coshov, and Chad Harms comprise the faculty team teaching the course to over 600 students each academic year. Miller – who was identified by BusinessWeek in 2009 as one of "Twenty-One People Who Will Change Business" – said that the foresight course stretches students to develop critical, systems, and creative thinking skills. They also must demonstrate the ability to think broadly, and to think forward as they prepare to enter the workforce.

More information on the foresight course, including a feature video, is also available here: <http://bizmagazine.nd.edu/article/?id=34>.

#### About the Mendoza College of Business

The Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame is a premier Catholic business school that fosters academic excellence while promoting the ideals of individual integrity, effective organizations and the greater good. The College offers undergraduate and graduate degrees, as well as both nonprofit and traditional executive development programs. Graduate degrees include the Notre Dame MBA, Executive MBA, Master of Nonprofit Administration and Master of Science in Accountancy. Mendoza currently is ranked No. 1 by Bloomberg Businessweek for its undergraduate program, and No. 20 for both its Executive MBA and its MBA programs. For more information, visit [business.nd.edu](http://business.nd.edu).

### Ben Sheppard Teaches Risk Analysis Course in Ecuador

In August, IAF Senior Associate Ben Sheppard taught a three-day course in Political Risk Analysis at the Catholic University in Guayaquil, Ecuador. The course was based on the graduate degree program he teaches at the Elliott School for International Relations at George Washington University. The class was comprised mainly of mature students with diverse employment backgrounds. Course topics included expropriation, governance, and the use of futures tools in political risk analysis.

### Peck Co-Authors Article on New Paradigm in Fitness

Jonathan Peck co-authored an article on health in the military, titled "Why Total Force Fitness?" and published in *Total Force Fitness for the 21st Century: A New Paradigm*, a supplement to the August 2010 issue of the Military Medicine Journal (Volume 175, No. 8). The supplement is available online through the Samueli Institute at <http://www.siib.org/news/news-home/publications/226-SIIB.html>. The abstract of the article is as follows:

In an age of sustained conflict, fitness requires continuous performance, resilience, and recovery of the whole person, not just the physical body. Injury from these conflicts is physical as well as mental, social and spiritual. Injury also impacts not only the service members, but also their families and communities, and the nation.

The burden is high and the framework of the current response does not match the circumstance or need. If our service members are to protect the freedom and security of our nation, we need a new approach to fitness; we must move beyond the idea of simply having a sound body to a more

holistic view of health and fitness that includes body, mind, and community.

In this article, the authors illustrate how science supports such a paradigm with research on how mind-body-spirit and community all interact to sustain health and accelerate healing in the path of stress and injury. A shift to total force fitness will be difficult, but essential, perhaps even for our very survival.

## Upcoming Events

"Role of Community Health Leveraging the Social Determinants of Health ", panel discussion at the [National Summit of Clinicians for Healthcare Justice](#). IAF Founder and Chairman Clem Bezold. September 24, 2010, 1:30–3:00 p.m., in Washington, DC.

"Preserving the Planet: A Human Challenge," panelist at [MEXICO ENCOUNTER 2010: Building the Future](#). Clem Bezold. October 20, 2010, at 11:30 a.m. in Mexico City. Program information in English and Spanish is available [here](#).

The Institute for Alternative Futures is a 501(c)3 non-profit research and education organization based in Alexandria, VA. IAF was founded in 1977 by Clem Bezold, Alvin Toffler, and James Dator. IAF has a long track record of using forecasts, scenarios, visioning, and other futures tools to help leading organizations understand the likely, challenging, and visionary developments that may take place in their environments, and to develop robust and visionary strategies that account for the inherent uncertainty of the future. IAF's past clients include the World Health Organization, AARP, American Cancer Society, and Rockefeller Foundation, as well as a wide range of multinational corporations through its for-profit subsidiary, Alternative Futures Associates. To learn more about what we can do for your organization, call us at (703) 684-5880 or write to [futurist@altfutures.org](mailto:futurist@altfutures.org).

We'd like to know what you think. Please send us your comments, questions, and things you would like to see included in future issues to [futurist@altfutures.org](mailto:futurist@altfutures.org).

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