



# Executive Summary



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## JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING SYSTEM INSIGHTS: CHAIRMEN JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF 1990 TO 2012

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Military leaders at many levels have used strategic planning in various ways to position their organizations to respond to the demands of the current situation, while simultaneously preparing to meet future challenges. This Letort Paper examines how the different Chairmen Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1990 to 2012 used a strategic planning system to enable them to meet their formal leadership responsibilities outlined in Title 10 of the U.S. Code. As such, it provides an historic perspective in assessing the different Chairmen's leadership legacies in using and modifying their strategic planning system. It also has a contemporary focus, as it describes the planning system's current processes and products. Because the strategic environment and its associated challenges can affect both a leader and staff's use of a planning system, this Paper provides an understanding of major changes in the strategic environment during this more than 2-decade time frame.

In the 1990s, the Chairmen were faced with responding to a strategic environment that began with the Gulf War and the Soviet Union's demise and continued with an increasing number of regional military operations across the spectrum of conflict. Since 2000, and particularly after September 2001, the Chairmen were faced with addressing global terrorism challenges, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the need to transform by developing future capabilities. The third decade's challenges began in 2010 and are

evolving as this Paper was written. They appear to be significantly different from the previous decade in light of the nation's fiscal challenges, the military's departure from Iraq, and forecasted future reductions in Afghanistan. Further, the current decade's uncertain challenges associated with shifting, interest-driven conditions, and a multinodal world as described in the 2011 National Military Strategy are different from the rigid security competition between opposing blocks associated with the 1990s.

To respond to these challenges, the planning system was formally revised five different times during this period. The most current revision in 2008 has specified processes and planning products under an overall framework of assess, advise, direct, and execute components. The assess component provides a comprehensive joint assessment of global challenges and existing joint capabilities, as well as force readiness and risk concerns. The advise component, which enables the Chairman to provide formal advice to the President, Secretary of Defense, National Security Council, and Congress, has specific resource, risk, and strategic assessment products. Further, this planning system interacts with others to enable the Chairman to execute roles associated with being the principal military advisor, articulating combatant commander concerns, validating military requirements, and providing advice in other strategic documents. The direct component focuses on implementing the President and Secretary of

Defense's guidance through strategies, plans, and doctrine. Finally, the execute component focuses on assisting with the command function through the National Military Command Center associated with the planning and execution of orders.

An examination of how the seven Chairmen used this planning system to respond to internal and external strategic challenges provides a formal leadership legacy and, most importantly, decisionmaking insights for future senior leaders. These leadership insights, which are supported by specific Chairman process changes or different products, are first related to the need to articulate a formal vision to effectively shape long-term change. Leaders need to ensure their planning system maintains a balance between flexibility and structure to respond to different types of challenges. The strategic planning process also needs to be inclusive and integrated with processes of those leaders who are above and below the Chairman. Leaders must modify their strategic planning system to align with their decisionmaking style and the nation's challenges, whether those changes are revolutionary or evolutionary in nature. Finally, a strategic planning system that has well-defined and inclusive processes and products can be a powerful mechanism to create a climate and help embed a culture within a complex

organization. This last insight comes from seeing how the Armed Forces have evolved from Service de-confliction in warfare and weapons capabilities in the early 1990s, to a greater joint interoperability in the late 1990s to early 2000s, and now to a growing joint interdependence focus.

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