

# JAMES JONES ON THE NSC UNDER OBAMA

A number of you have been talking in threads about this WaPo article describing the NSC's "expanded" power.

President Obama plans to order a sweeping overhaul of the National Security Council, expanding its membership and increasing its authority to set strategy across a wide spectrum of international and domestic issues.

The result will be a "dramatically different" NSC from that of the Bush administration or any of its predecessors since the forum was established after World War II to advise the president on diplomatic and military matters, according to national security adviser James L. Jones, who described the changes in an interview. "The world that we live in has changed so dramatically in this decade that organizations that were created to meet a certain set of criteria no longer are terribly useful," he said.

[snip]

The new structure, to be outlined in a presidential directive and a detailed implementation document by Jones, will expand the NSC's reach far beyond the range of traditional foreign policy issues and turn it into a much more elastic body, with Cabinet and departmental seats at the table – historically occupied only by the secretaries of defense and state – determined on an issue-by-issue basis. Jones said the directive will probably be completed this week.

I actually think this is a good thing—indication

that Obama will not view national defense to be exclusively a military thing. How much better off will we be, for example, if Steven Chu is at the table with Bob Gates and James Jones and Hillary Clinton when they're discussing energy issues and climate change? I'd like to have the Nobel Prize winning scientist participating, thank you, and this reorganization appears designed to do just that.

Today, Jones described some of these changes in a speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy (via email). Here are the bits addressing changes to the NSC:

I would like to take just a moment to speak to you about his approach to national security and in fact international security and the role that I see the National Security Council playing. First and foremost the President's strategic approach will be grounded in the real understanding of the challenges we face in the 21st century. We must simply better understand the environment that we are in. The President, if nothing else, is a pragmatist. He knows that we must deal with the world as it is. And he knows that the world is a very different place than it was just a few years ago. As he said in his inaugural address, the world has changed and we must change with it. And we certainly agree that the world is a multipolar place in the time frame of the moments we are in.

It is hard to overstate the differences between the 20th and the 21st centuries. We have already experienced many, many differences in the 21st century. When this conference first met, everything was viewed through the prism of the Cold War. And in retrospect, life was simpler then. It was certainly more organized. It was certainly more symmetric.

Year in and year out, the strategic

environment was fairly consistent and predictable. Threats were "conventional." The transatlantic security partnership was largely designed to meet the threats of a very symmetric world. It was reactive. The NATO partnership was conceived to be a defensive and fairly static alliance. And I spent a good deal of my career in uniform serving within this framework. But to move forward, we must understand the terms national security and international security are no longer limited to the ministries of defense and foreign ministries; in fact, it encompasses the economic aspects of our societies. It encompasses energy. It encompasses new threats, asymmetric threats involving proliferation, involving the illegal shipment of arms and narco-terrorism, and the like. Borders are no longer recognized and the simultaneity of the threats that face us are occurring at a more rapid pace.

And as the President has detailed, a comprehensive approach to our national security and international security in the 21st century must identify and understand that the wider array of existing threats that threaten us. To name a few:

- *Terror and extremism has taken many lives and on many continents across the globe.*
- *The ongoing struggle in Afghanistan and the activity along the Pakistani border is an international security challenge of the highest order.*

- *The spread of nuclear and chemical biological and cyber-technologies that could upset the global order and cause catastrophe on an unimaginable scale is real. It is pressing and it is time that we dealt with it.*
- *The overdependence on fossil fuels that endangers our security, our economies, and the health of the planet.*
- *Protracted tribal, ethnic, and religious conflicts.*
- *Poverty, corruption, and disease stands in the way of progress and causes great suffering in many parts of the world.*
- *Narco-terrorism that provides the economic fuel for insurgencies.*
- *And an economic crisis that serves as the foundation of our strength.*

This list is by no means exhaustive. The challenges that we face are broader and more diverse than we ever imagined, even after the terrible events of 9/11. And our capacity to meet these challenges in my view does not yet match the urgency

of what is required. To be blunt, the institutions and approaches that we forged together through the 20th century are still adjusting to meet the realities of the 21st century. And the world has definitely changed, but we have not changed with it. But it is not too late, and this is the good news.

In our country, one of the institutions that is changing is the National Security Council, which like so much of our national and international security architecture was formed in the wake of World War II and during the Cold War. So let me say a few words about what the National Security Council does and how President Obama has asked that I approach my job as National Security Adviser. The President has made clear that to succeed against 21st century challenges, the United States must use, balance, and integrate all elements of national influence: our military and our diplomacy, our economy and our intelligence, and law enforcement capacity, our cultural outreach, and as was mentioned yesterday, the power of our moral example, in short, our values. Given this role, the NSC is by definition at the nexus of that effort. It integrates on a strategic sense all elements of our national security community towards the development of effective policy development and interagency cooperation. But to better carry out the president's priorities, the National Security Council must respond to the world the way it is and not as we wish it were. And it must consider the fusion of our national priorities within the broader international context and interest. The NSC's mission is relatively simple. It should perform the functions that it alone can perform and serve as a strategic center – and the word

strategic is operative here – for the President’s priorities.

To achieve those goals we will be guided by several principles. As one of our great comedians in the United States, Groucho Marx, once said, "These are our principles. And if you don’t like them, we have others."

First, the NSC must be strategic, as I mentioned. It is easy to get bogged down in the tactical concerns that consume the day-to-day conduct. As a matter of fact, it is much more enjoyable to be involved at the tactical level. But we won’t effectively advance the priorities if we spend our time reacting to events, instead of shaping them. And that requires strategic thinking. The National Security Council I think is unique in its ability to step back and take a longer and wider view of our American national security and our role in the shared context of our international security as well.

Second, the NSC must manage coordination across different agencies of the government – increasing numbers of agencies. We have learned the hard way that this has real implications, both in terms of how policy has developed in Washington and how it is in fact executed. The NSC must therefore function as a strategic integrator by doing several things. One, by ensuring that dissenting views are heard and considered throughout the policy-making process. Two, by monitoring policy implementation to ensure that agencies are coordinating effectively in the field, and that the President’s priorities are being carried out in practice. Third, the NSC must be transparent. We serve the President. We also serve other principal agencies of

our government. And that's why I am committed to managing a process that is as open as possible so that we forge policies that are widely understood throughout our government by our people and by our partners around the world. Fourth, the National Security Council must be agile. We face nimble adversaries and all of us will have to confront fast-moving crises – from conflict and terrorism to new diseases and environmental disasters. To keep pace, we will have to move faster in developing policy and priorities than did our predecessors. The world is a smaller place. Communications is more rapid. And therefore our reactions must be swifter. And we must be able to communicate rapidly throughout the government and around the world in order to effectively respond.

And finally, the National Security Council must adapt to evolving challenges. There are traditional priorities that we will manage. But we must also update our outlook and sometimes our organization to keep pace with the changing world. To give you just a few examples, the NSC today works very closely with President Obama's National Economic Council, which is led by Mr. Larry Summers, so that our response to the economic crisis is coordinated with our global partners and our national security needs. The NSC has worked closely with the White House Counsel's office as we implement the President's orders to ban torture and close the detention center at Guantanamo Bay. The National Security Council is undertaking a review to determine how best to unify our efforts to combat terrorism around the world while protecting our homeland. And this effort will be led by Mr. John Brennan.

The National Security Council will be at the table as our government forges a new approach to energy security and climate change that demand broad cooperation across the U.S. Government and more persistent American leadership around the world. And the NSC is evaluating how to update our capacity to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction while also placing a far higher priority on cyber security.

There is no fixed model that can capture the world in all of its complexity. What's right today will have to be different four years from now or eight years from now. And that's precisely the point. The NSC's comparatively small size gives it a unique capacity to reinvent itself as required and to pivot on the key priorities of our time.

Can't say I'm crazy about narco-terrorism being lumped in there (because in the Western hemisphere that's often a coded way to attack populist regimes). But it's high time poverty around the world became an issue deemed worthy of the attention of the NSC. To say nothing about our addiction to fossil fuel.