

In the decade before 9/11, presidential discussion of and congressional and public attention to foreign affairs and national security were dominated by other issues—among them, Haiti, Bosnia, Russia, China, Somalia, Kosovo, NATO enlargement, the Middle East peace process, missile defense, and globalization. Terrorism infrequently took center stage; and when it did, the context was often terrorists' tactics—a chemical, biological, nuclear, or computer threat—not terrorist organizations.¹⁰⁷

Second, Congress tends to follow the overall lead of the president on budget issues with respect to national security matters. There are often sharp arguments about individual programs and internal priorities, but by and large the overall funding authorized and appropriated by the Congress comes out close to the president's request. This tendency was certainly illustrated by the downward trends in spending on defense, intelligence, and foreign affairs in the first part of the 1990s. The White House, to be sure, read the political signals coming from Capitol Hill, but the Congress largely acceded to the executive branch's funding requests. In the second half of the decade, Congress appropriated some 98 percent of what the administration requested for intelligence programs. Apart from the Gingrich supplemental of \$1.5 billion for overall intelligence programs in fiscal year 1999, the key decisions on overall allocation of resources for national security issues in the decade before 9/11—including counterterrorism funding—were made in the president's Office of Management and Budget.¹⁰⁸

Third, Congress did not reorganize itself after the end of the Cold War to address new threats. Recommendations by the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress were implemented, in part, in the House of Representatives after the 1994 elections, but there was no reorganization of national security functions. The Senate undertook no appreciable changes. Traditional issues—foreign policy, defense, intelligence—continued to be handled by committees whose structure remained largely unaltered, while issues such as transnational terrorism fell between the cracks. Terrorism came under the jurisdiction of at least 14 different committees in the House alone, and budget and oversight functions in the House and Senate concerning terrorism were also splintered badly among committees. Little effort was made to consider an integrated policy toward terrorism, which might range from identifying the threat to addressing vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure; and the piecemeal approach in the Congress contributed to the problems of the executive branch in formulating such a policy.¹⁰⁹

Fourth, the oversight function of Congress has diminished over time. In recent years, traditional review of the administration of programs and the implementation of laws has been replaced by "a focus on personal investigations, possible scandals, and issues designed to generate media attention." The unglamorous but essential work of oversight has been neglected, and few members past or present believe it is performed well. DCI Tenet told us: "We ran