

September 8th, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio

Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

As you lead a period of reassessment and reform across major components of the Executive Branch, the Diplomatic Studies Foundation would like to offer a focused recommendation: the United States should not undertake significant and sustained engagement in another country—whether to combat terrorism, support economic development, or pursue regime change—without a fully developed strategic plan originating within the National Security Council (NSC).

Such a plan must include all relevant civilian agencies and leverage their strategic and tactical capabilities from the outset. The cost of failing to plan—of launching major efforts without a cohesive, interagency approach—is clearly visible in our legacy of interventions across the Middle East.

The NSC is the proper home for this kind of integrated planning. It should be responsible for formulating the strategic vision, conducting a thorough inventory of available assets, and coordinating across departments and agencies. These plans must be bilateral in nature, with diplomatic engagement as a critical but not standalone component. They should incorporate U.S. civilian agencies, non-kinetic military tools, the private sector, and NGO partners—effectively aligning all elements of national power.

Moreover, such plans should not remain theoretical. They should be tested rigorously—through tabletop exercises, modeling, and simulations—to evaluate whether available assets can achieve defined objectives. This approach has long served the military and the corporate sector well. It is time for the NSC to apply the same discipline to America's civilian-led engagements abroad.

Given your current dual-hatted role, this is an ideal time to explore the institutionalization of this process.

From an old Ambassador and former Special Assistant to President G.H.W. Bush, I send my best wishes for your success in this critical role.

Sincerely,

Ambassador David Miller (Ret.)

President
Diplomatic Studies Foundation