Editor's Letter

Invention and innovation have been driving supply chain and logistics since the dawn of civilization. One can argue that one of the first applications of one of the most enduring inventions of all time, the wheel, was used to ease the movement of cargo. Great cities rose along rivers because the waterways provided the transportation networks. The Silk Road was a supply chain route that opened up trade and commerce between Europe and Asia. Massive transformation in supply chains took place in the 20th century as a consequence of mass production combined with global sourcing and distribution. Innovation continues to shape the supply chain and logistics landscape, though of late the primary focus of innovation has been on driving efficiency and effectiveness in supply chain through the use of information technology.

In this globally connected economy, supply chain logistics is omnipresent. It is the engine behind the estimated $65 trillion gross domestic product of all nations. It provides the mechanism that, on a massive scale, transports and distributes both raw materials and finished products through vast and complex networks of ports, warehouses, distribution centers, waterways, airways, roadways and railways. The complexity of supply chains also make them vulnerable from a security perspective.

Commercial firms are not the only entities involved in supply chains; governments play a significant role as well. Not only do governments own and operate some of the largest and most complex supply chains in the world, they also enable commercial supply chains by owning and operating some of the critical infrastructure components. Governments also provide the regulatory framework and security regime for supply chain operations — an eternal balancing act between the security needs dictated by national security priorities and the commercial demands of rapid movement of goods through the system.

Over the last few years, supply chains have come under intense and visible pressures. The unrelenting march of globalization has placed a premium on efficiency. Managing quality and reliability in the context of a complex, distributed, global manufacturing environment has heightened the need for end-to-end visibility. Rapidly responding to the supply chain demands placed by wars or natural catastrophes has highlighted the imperative to connect the disparate players through much different design and operating paradigms. The current economic crisis adds another level of complexity. Never before have governments faced a need to do more with less so that every iota of efficiency gain can be redirected to providing economic stimuli to help generate long-term economic benefits.

With this as the context, we have dedicated the third edition of the EDS Global Government Journal to the subject of Synchronization, Security and Speed in Logistics Operations. In this journal, we discuss several points of view on how governments, not-for-profits and industry can make transformational improvements in their operations. How must governments address supply chain challenges in the context of dynamic geo-political change? How should these operations excel in these volatile energy and economic environments? How do governments balance the orthogonal needs of steady-state operations and emergency response?

Consistent with the theme of earlier journals, these articles provide a point of view and perspective from which we seek to engage with you in a wider discussion. We wish to impress upon our readers the need to converge design and operating principles, as well as the importance of developing an underlying framework that will allow governments to operate with speed and agility.

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