



**STRATEGY
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**THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND NATIONAL
INTERESTS: QUANTITY OR QUALITY?**

BY

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The National Security Strategy and National Interests: Quantity or Quality?

by

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ABSTRACT

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The national security strategy (NSS), National Security Strategy for a New Century, published in December 1999, categorizes national interests as vital, important, and humanitarian and other interests. Although all three, as defined within the context of national interests, have relative merit for US national security, the classification of national interests is not necessary. The Bush administration should take this opportunity to formulate a coherent NSS that is based on the realities of the post-Cold War international community and more importantly, conduct a careful assessment of what strategy would be most suitable to defend clearly defined vital interests and subsequently, the nation's security. To accomplish the task of formulating a coherent NSS, the administration should accomplish three separate yet inextricably linked tasks to facilitate an integrated implementation with all agencies of the executive branch. First, eliminate the categorization of national interests and only identify those that are vital to the security of the United States. Second, assess the geo-strategic environment and its potential implications on the successful integrated implementation of the NSS. Third, create an organization, other than the National Security Council (NSC), to function as the executive agent tasked with effectively coordinating the integrated implementation of the NSS.

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THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND NATIONAL INTERESTS: QUANTITY OR QUALITY?

Strategy and policy must be grounded in the national interest. The national interest has many strands – political, economic, security, and humanitarian. National interests are the most durable basis for assuring policy consistency. Gaining and sustaining public support for U.S. policy is best achieved when coupled with clearly visible national interests.¹

— U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century

Before 1986, the National Security Strategy (NSS) was based on the concept of containment and deterring the global expansion of communism. Although the Cold War had reached its zenith several years earlier, the United States was struggling with transitioning from a strategy that had committed all elements of power, particularly the military, towards a clearly defined adversary for over forty years to one without a visible threat. The Soviet Union was fast approaching its economic culminating point and, as a result, the Soviet government's ability to support its military element of power was significantly diminished. The consequence of this event was that the Soviet Union's influence and stature as a credible and visible threat to both international and America's national security concurrently diminished.

A direct result of this change in the strategic balance of power was for the United States to initiate an appraisal of the continued viability of its current strategy of containment. The political environment and competition for national wealth, specifically budgetary resources, was such that the Congress deemed it necessary to establish a formal process that would require the president to correlate expenditures on national security to vital national interests. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 was the Congress' attempt to legislate a solution to what it, and many observers, believed to be the executive branch's inability to formulate a coherent and integrated strategy that would prudently use national resources towards the security of vital national interests."²

The Goldwater-Nichols Act established the annual requirement for the president to publish and submit a National Security Strategy Report (NSSR) to the United States Congress. The content and literary style of the NSSR may contrast between administrations but, at a minimum, is required to include a comprehensive description and narrative of five essential elements. These elements, addressed throughout the NSSR, are intended to provide focus in terms of values, coherence in terms of relating resources towards objectives, integration in terms of elements of power, and its time horizon.³

Since the passage of the legislation, a total of seven NSSRs have been presented to Congress with the most recent, A National Security Strategy for a New Century, published in December 1999. Although a revised NSSR from the Bush administration will be forthcoming, President Clinton's NSS will remain the basis for both foreign policy and military strategy until President Bush transmits his revision to the Congress.

President Clinton's NSS articulates a policy that adheres to the principles of selective engagement and enlargement. Proponents of the strategy have evaluated its success through the expansion of global markets, regional stability, and increasing economic wealth for the nation. This, in turn, enhances the United States' continued position of leadership and influence in the international community, thereby enhancing national security. In contrast, critics argue the strategy requires the United States to commit national resources towards objectives that are considered neither vital nor important to the national security of the United States or at the minimum, never considered before.

This paradox should be a concern for President Bush and his team of national security advisors as they formulate the policies that will be the basis of the national security strategy during his administration. Unless President Bush assesses the geo-strategic environment and its relationship with national interests in a different way, the complexities and uncertainties confronting the United States will remain relatively consistent with those that existed during the Clinton administration. However, the Bush administration should consider these aspects and assess whether the United States should adopt a stratagem more conducive to the geo-strategic environment and not based on a strategy and national security apparatus designed to implement the containment strategy of the Cold War era.

The transition from one administration to another signifies the advent of new ideologies, policies, viewpoints, and strategic vision for the nation. The absence of a clearly visible and immediate threat to vital national interests for the next twenty-five years mandates a review of the national strategy that should encompass: defining security interests; identifying threats to those interests; and allocating military, diplomatic, and economic resources to defend those interests.⁴ The Bush administration could take this opportunity to formulate a coherent NSS that is based on the realities of the post-Cold War international community and more importantly, conduct a careful assessment of what strategy would be most suitable to defend clearly defined vital interests and subsequently, the nation's security.

To accomplish this daunting endeavor of formulating a coherent NSS, the Bush administration should accomplish three separate yet inextricably linked tasks to facilitate an integrated implementation with all agencies of the executive branch. First, eliminate the

categorization of national interests, only identify those that are vital to the security of the United States, and more importantly, articulate their significance to the American populace. Second, assess the geo-strategic environment and its potential implications on the successful integrated implementation of the NSS. Third, the dynamic and uncertain nature of the geo-strategic environment may necessitate the president to appoint an individual or organization, other than the National Security Council (NSC), to function as the executive agent tasked with effectively coordinating the integrated implementation of the NSS with other agencies within the executive branch. One could argue that if these three tasks were accomplished, a president's NSS would be more cohesive and produce a consistent policy, supported by the American populace, and principally based on ensuring the security of vital national interests.

NATIONAL INTERESTS: HOW MANY DO WE NEED?

The most significant element of the NSS requirements discussed above is the identification of national interests, goals, and objectives that are vital to the national security of the United States. This narrative, if interpreted within the strict context of the language, requires the president to only identify vital interests – those that are essential to the security and survival of the United States. However, the current NSS expands upon this requirement by categorizing national interests as vital, important, and those that are humanitarian or other interests.

Statesmen and scholars have engaged in debates that present what they perceive constitute a “national interest.” Although national interests evolve from the strategic environment and existing threats, they essentially remain the same regardless of the period of history or circumstances. Samuel P. Huntington, a professor at Harvard University, summarizes this concept in a basic yet very accurate description, “A national interest is a public good of concern to all or most Americans; a vital national interest is one in which they are willing to expend blood and treasure to defend. National interests usually combine security and material concerns, on the one hand, and moral and ethical concerns, on the other.”⁵

Mr. Huntington’s summarization of what comprises a vital national interest is evident in the descriptive narratives in the current NSS yet further classifies them as either important or humanitarian and other interests. As stated in the introduction of the NSS, vital interests are those of “broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety, and vitality of our nation.”⁶ This category of national interests is of utmost importance to our national security and as a result, the nation is willing to employ all elements of power, to include use of military force, towards their defense. The second category are important national interests that “do not affect our national survival, but they do affect our national well-being and the character of world...”⁷ The third

category is humanitarian and other interests that require action because United States values demand it.⁸ Although the current NSS provides an adequate description of the three categories of national interests, the narratives pertaining to the threats have ambiguities related to unnecessarily classifying them into categories other than vital national interests.

The most effective way to eliminate any ambiguity related to national interests is to identify only those vital to the security of the United States. Despite the complexities and uncertainties of the evolving geo-strategic environment, vital national interests will remain constant and unchanged. Mr. Robert Jervis, a professor at the Naval War College, states, "The most vital interest of any country is security from invasion or attack. The second-most-vital interest, often linked to, is the ability to protect the state's closest allies, who may be valuable because they contribute to the state's security or because they are valued in their own right. A third interest is in economic prosperity, which both contributes to security and is a goal in itself."⁹

If President Bush adopts a similar philosophy as addressed above and articulates only vital national interests in the NSSR, it will contribute to a more definitive understanding of what the nation will commit resources towards their advancement and protection. As a result, the national interests could be more clearly defined and more importantly, a consensus among the American populace and allies could be garnered to support the commitment of national resources towards their security, advancement, and attainment. General Andrew J. Goodpaster underscores the significance of popular support in the context of the current strategic environment stating, "Sustaining public support on the issues confronting the United States is demonstrably more difficult and uncertain now than in the era of a strategic bipolar contest. Coherent definitions of interests and clear development of policies may help convey a sense of priorities."¹⁰

This formidable task highlights the difficulties that could confront the Bush administration as they undertake the task of identifying our national interests. National support will be critical when formulating the policy and in particular, when implementing the national security strategy. Although President Bush conveyed his disagreement with various aspects of the current national strategy during the 2000 presidential campaign, his administration will be faced with geo-strategic issues and challenges similar to those that confronted the Clinton administration. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell acknowledged that both administrations have similar assessments of the strategic environment and he concluded the United States must remain engaged in the international community. In his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he stated, "...there has been a remarkable continuity in our world outlook over the years, no matter what political party was in power or who occupied the White House."¹¹ He

further stated, "...there is no inclination whatsoever to have our nation withdraw from the world into a fortress of protectionism or an island of isolation."¹² Within the context of Secretary Powell's comments, "Bush's team of national security advisors are confronted with a formidable challenge to remain engaged in international events yet overcome the reluctance of the American people to pay attention to ill-defined matters, particularly foreign problems that are remote in both distance and time."¹³

The NSS, similar to other policies published by the executive branch, is formulated to achieve a prescribed political objective established by the president. In particular, the determination of national interests will be directly related to the president and his national security advisors' vision of interests. The Clinton administration, due to the absence of an immediate and visible threat, principally focused on a domestic agenda and consequently, formulated the NSS to primarily reflect economic policies as the principal national security interest. Although continued and sustained economic growth can enhance national security, the NSS should reflect a balance of all elements of power and illustrate a direct correlation to the level of national commitment and resolve towards the achievement of national interests should be articulated.

Essentially, a clear and definitive identification of vital national interests must be relative to the elements of power we are willing to commit towards our national security. We must identify what we, as a nation, consider vital to our national security and take the necessary actions to ensure their continued existence. The Bush NSS should identify vital national interests as defined by Huntington -- those of broad, overriding importance to the survival, safety, and vitality of our nation. Additionally, an assessment of the geo-strategic environment and its potential implications relative to our national interests should facilitate an understanding of how we can best commit our national resources that will achieve national objectives and ultimately, advance our vital national interests. Secretary Powell summarizes what could, and in all probability, be the Bush administration's position when he stated, "...we must be involved according to our national interests and not in some haphazard way that seems more dictated by crisis du jour than by serious, thoughtful foreign policy."¹⁴

THE GEO-STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The demise of the Soviet Union signified the conclusion of an era that clearly defined and shaped the United States' national security strategy for over four decades. The nation's interests directly related to a strategy designed to deter the Soviet Union and contain the global spread of communism. The threat to vital national interests was clearly visible to the United

States and our allies. The peaceful co-existence of the former and current global superpowers presents an ironic twist within the international community. Aside from the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, the Cold War era was a period of regional stability and world order-- both superpowers with their respective alliances and regional influences. In contrast, the current multi-polar world characterized by regional instability and global uncertainty has resulted in a new generation of potential crises and threats that will require the United States to assess and if warranted, resolve.

Diplomats, scholars, intelligence analysts, and senior military leaders have evaluated the geo-strategic environment and reached similar conclusions regarding its fundamental characteristics -- the international community will continue to change driven by economic, political, and societal factors. The challenge for the Bush NSSR will reside in its ability to incorporate the complex and changing geo-strategic environment into strategy and policy that will advance and defend national interests that are vital to the security of United States.

The former Commander-in-Chief of the United States Atlantic Command, General John J. Sheehan used the analogy of a global village to illustrate the significant disparities in culture, ethnicity, education, religion, and economic wealth.¹⁵ The issue is these disparities, either individually or collectively, have the potential to evolve into regional crises throughout the international community. These potential crises will be most likely originate from cultural, ethnic, religious, or economic conflicts that occur within national borders or geographic regions. These regional crises may not have an immediate impact on American national interests but when coupled with the effects of globalization, could eventually present a threat to national security. The incongruent nature of these potential crises will require a NSS that implements a balanced strategy that encompasses all elements of national power and appropriate to the achieve the desired objectives.

The Bush administration faces a challenge to develop a strategic direction for the NSS -- regional stability for its inherent benefits or one that focuses on continuing to seek economic prosperity as the ultimate objective. Before determining a specific strategic direction, the Bush administration should assess the existing and evolving trends of the geo-strategic environment that could heavily influence national policy. The three broad yet interrelated areas that could influence the strategic direction for the NSSR that warrant a brief discussion are global trends, existing alliances, and the United Nations.

Global Trends

Although conflicts can develop from a multitude of socioeconomic factors, there are many factors that will also affect issues involving the geo-strategic environment. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in conjunction with non-governmental specialists and subject matter experts, conducted a comprehensive analysis that examined various factors that will shape the world of 2015. The analysis, Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future With Nongovernment Experts, provide assessments of major drivers and trends that collectively depict a long-range strategic perspective of the future geo-strategic environment.¹⁶

The analysis identifies seven key drivers; demographics, natural resources and environment, science and technology, global economy and globalization, national and international governance, future conflict, and the role of the United States. It is not within the scope of this paper to address each driver to the level of detail contained in the study. Although these drivers characterize the geo-strategic environment either individually or collectively, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorism present the most immediate threats to national interests that are vital to security of the United States. Therefore, a brief narrative addressing these concerns should illustrate their impact on American national interests.

States, in the traditional context, will retain a position of dominance in the international community and continue to serve as the primary institution of political identity during the next two decades.¹⁷ These nation states will, however, be confronted with challenges in their ability to adequately provide for their citizens; particularly, in less developed nations. Socioeconomic imbalances, scarcity of natural resources, internal conflicts, and rapid urbanization will contribute to political instability and could result in failed states. The weakening of these states, regardless of their strategic affiliation with the United States, could adversely affect regional stability.¹⁸ The spillover effect of a nation's internal stability can develop into a crisis involving several states in a region and consequently, challenge United States' strategic interests.

An additional, yet arguably the most significant, effect in the growth of technology will be the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their relative accessibility to adversarial nations and non-state actors. Strategic WMD threats, including nuclear missile threats, in which China, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq could develop the capability to strike the United States is a rising threat.¹⁹ Less-developed nations may not possess the resources to maintain an adequate military force to provide for their defense and may acquire a less expensive WMD capability to offset the security imbalance and enhance their national security.

The technology, resources, and relative availability to develop and maintain these cost-effective weapons will remain a major threat to United States' strategic interests.

International terrorism, multinational in scale and less responsive to external influences, will remain a major transnational problem through the coming decades.²⁰ The majority of terrorist actions, to include state-sponsored organizations, will be perpetrated by individuals and groups influenced by ethnic, religious, nationalistic, separatist, and political motivations.²¹ Similarly, terrorists will have access to biological and chemical weapons and because of their relative economy, will proliferate in potential employment against United States' interests. American citizens and property will continue to be at risk for terrorist attacks because of the United States' continued involvement in international affairs.²²

These implications for national interests of these global trends are predominantly associated with a risk assessment of continued engagement in international affairs and the potential impact upon national security. The NSS should address the relative importance of continued engagement in international affairs are necessary to advance and safeguard national interests that are vital to the security of the United States. In addition, the national leadership should pursue an aggressive and definitive policy that the United States will take decisive action against adversaries who threaten or attack the United States or its allies with WMD or terrorist acts.

Existing Alliances

The preponderance of existing alliances is based on the national interests that were prevalent during the Cold War era. Many of these alliances remain in existence to achieve the current NSS objective of global stability despite the absence of a credible threat to vital national interests or the security of the United States. Mr. Ted Carpenter of the CATO Institute submits, "Although global stability might be appealing in the abstract, the costs and risks entailed in achieving that goal are excessive. One of the worst effects is the perpetuation of such obsolete Cold War era military alliances as NATO and the bilateral defense treaties with Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK)."²³ The Soviet Union's dissolution has essentially eliminated a visible and viable threat to the vital interests to the United States. Perhaps the time is appropriate to assess a more appropriate level of involvement by the United States in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other regional alliances relative to our vital national interests.

However, there are critics as summarized by Mr. Carpenter's assessment, "Washington's Cold War era alliances also have the potential to entangle the United States in a host of obscure conflicts that have little relevance to America's legitimate security concerns. The ongoing

transformation of NATO from an alliance to deter Soviet aggression against Western Europe into a regional crisis management organization is a case in point. That new mission blurs the boundaries of NATO's traditional theater of operations and threatens to involve the United States in Eastern Europe and the decaying Soviet empire."²⁴ An example of this perspective could include the Balkan operations that appeal more to the idealistic notions of the United States rather than a direct threat to a vital national interest.

There are also discussions of continued United States' involvement in existing and emerging mutual defense alliances. Advocates for these alliances have a tendency to emphasize the ability and necessity of these alliances to enhance regional stability that ultimately, protect interests vital to national security. The alliances have been long-standing and contribute military security but also include economic and political stabilizing effect within a region. In contrast, critics will argue, "Advocates of a global stability mission also mistakenly assume that other major international actors will be cooperative junior partners in U.S.-led security efforts. However, the belief that Japan and Western European powers will continue to follow Washington's leadership throughout the Cold War seems erroneous. International relations theory (as well as international relations history) would predict the gradual dissolution of Cold War era solidarity now that there is no longer a credible common threat to promote cohesion among allies."²⁵

The absence of a credible threat coupled with the competition for finite resources, especially financial resources, requires an introspective review of what our present policies achieve through our regional alliances. The United States incurs a significant portion of the financial burden in these alliances despite the other member nation's having robust economies with the capability to contribute more financial resources. As an example of fiscal obligations for the United States, NATO cost \$120 billion a year during later stages of the Cold War and reductions of troop levels will cost approximately \$92 billion per year.²⁶ Similarly, the defense of Japan, South Korea, and other East Asian allies costs another \$40 billion per year.²⁷ These regions are principally dominated by industrialized nations with gross domestic products that could more than capably provide a larger share of the burden sharing -- so why the United States is engaged? Alliances may seem to favor nations that desire subsidized defense.

The Bush administration should review the national commitment associated with these alliances to determine their continued viability relative to available resources. It is not to imply the United States should withdraw from existing alliances or pursue other alliances but more to relate the level of commitment to a clearly defined objective that is within the scope of our vital interests that are at stake. Carpenter further suggests, "It is time to recognize with the

disintegration of the Soviet Union, the mission of America's Cold War alliances has been accomplished. U.S. policymakers must now move to create a new defense strategy that is appropriate for a post-Cold War setting that does not waste American resources or needlessly risk American lives."²⁸

United Nations

The United States is the most dominant and influential member of the United Nations (UN) and as a result, it incurs responsibilities that may be determined by the actions and desires of the other member states. Although the United States would take decisive action to protect its vital national interests when threatened, it may be required to commit significant national resources towards interests categorized as important, humanitarian, or other interests. This policy should ensure that the United States, as the only remaining global superpower, remains engaged and maintains its position of dominance, influence, and leadership within the international community.

Very few nations, if any, could do without United States' continued and active membership in the UN. The United States' membership in the UN is an important means by which the nation can protect its national interests and maintain its international leadership role.²⁹ The American populace would generally support humanitarian actions that include providing assistance vice seeking unlimited personal benefit for the nation. However, the most controversial issue that has surfaced pertains to commitment of American military forces in support of operations that include peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and humanitarian missions.

The Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan, has been refining a policy that calls on the international community to intervene wherever and whenever human lives are being consumed in conflagrations of hate, disease, or poverty.³⁰ Although the end of the Cold War was believed to be the advent of peace and prosperity, the absence of a bipolar paradigm has indirectly contributed to rising instability in various regions throughout the world. This could require the United States to become increasingly involved in humanitarian operations or intervene in conflicts that may not be vital to the national interest but are necessary for the maintaining the United States' global position of leadership and influence among allies. If the nation accepts this policy, then the NSS should address why a military presence might be necessary to advance these "lesser" interests.

Mr. Annan has two years remaining in his capacity as Secretary General. He has stated that he desires to make world leaders aware of their responsibility not just for their own citizens, but also for other nations throughout the world.³¹ Furthermore the tenets of this "Kofi Doctrine"

stipulate that he “believes that nothing – particularly not state borders – should stand in the way of intervention” and that “state sovereignty is not a shield.”³² The United States, as a member of the UN, may be required to support these endeavors with economic, political, or military resources. If these UN sanctioned endeavors are not considered or perceived to be in the nation’s vital interest, it may be difficult to garner support from the Congress or, more importantly, American public to characterize this as a necessity.

The United States has been, and will continue to be, an advocate of the United Nations and its principal tenets well into the future. The UN is a viable instrument that with reformations in organization and procedures as outlined in its 2000 Brahimi Report that provides a forum and venue for the United States to pursue its national interests. However, it is imperative that the Bush administration formulates and articulates an unambiguous policy that articulates the relationship of vital national interests and support of UN operations in the NSS. Mr. William H. Luers, Chairman of the United Nations Association of America, suggests that continued American support for the UN will reduce the gradual spread of traditional regional security challenges that will inevitably affect the nation, even if they do not present an immediate threat to American interests today.³³

Throughout history, the perception of intent or the actual commitment of military force is the most credible means of demonstrating immediate national resolve in a crisis or tenuous situation. The national command authority has customarily employed US armed forces after exhausting all other means. This was not a common practice during the Clinton administration. Therefore, it is essential that President Bush’s NSS convey that all elements of power, to include military presence or force, will be employed to advance the nation’s interests – regardless of category and may at times, be in support of allies, alliances, or the United Nations.

Implications of the Changing Geo-Strategic Environment

It is highly improbable, given the uncertainties of the strategic environment and conditions, that a desired level of global or regional stability is attainable. Similarly, it is equally improbable that a desired level of economic balance can be achieved given the disparity of natural resources and the industrial infrastructure resident in most lesser developed nations and geographic regions. Furthermore, a potential crisis could arise wherein American involvement may be warranted based on a pre-existing alliance or United Nations mandate yet is not a vital national interest.

The United States will undoubtedly continue to be an influential force in the international community. American economic, technological, military, and diplomatic influence will ensure

America's preeminence.³⁴ However, these aspects of national power will not suffice for the United States to maintain its position of unrivaled international leadership. In the absence of a clear and overriding national security threat, the United States will have difficulty drawing on its economic prowess to advance its foreign policy agenda.³⁵ Furthermore, the priority of the American private sector, which is central to maintaining American economic power, will be more interested in financial profitability rather than foreign policy objectives.³⁶

These issues indicate that the NSS should implement a strategy that incorporates a balanced application of national resources towards interests that are vital to national security. An assessment of existing alliances, potential economic initiatives, and support to the United Nations should encompass only those areas wherein the United States has a vested interest and achieves national objectives. Future policies will require a balanced approach of all elements of national power that maximizes the resources and American resolve towards interests that are vital to the continued global influence of the United States.

WHO IS IN CHARGE?

Many of the security challenges the United States will face in the post-Cold War era will require the close cooperation of military, governmental and non-governmental organizations.³⁷ The strategic environment, coupled with the effects of globalization has blurred, if not eliminated the dividing line between foreign and domestic policy.³⁸ With this in mind, an executive agent is required to coordinate the various governmental agencies to achieve an integrated implementation of the NSS. Although the National Security Council (NSC) has traditionally fulfilled this role to a varying degree, its evolution into a bureaucratic organization has affected its ability to function effectively in a dramatically changed international security environment.³⁹

The NSC has become more like an agency than a presidential staff and has become immersed in policy details with a principal focus on the short-term issues.⁴⁰ Because of this predominantly reactive vice proactive approach to crises and situations, the NSC is not able to adequately provide sufficient attention to the critical task of coordinating the policy process so the president can make clear foreign policy and security policy decisions in a timely manner.⁴¹ The geo-strategic environment has changed considerably since the NSC was established in 1947 and will continue to change in the future. Therefore, it may be time to consider an alternative national security apparatus that is more suited to operate in the evolving security environment.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has proposed an alternative institutional structure for national security that warrants serious consideration. CSIS

recommends the creation of a National Security Directorate (NSD) that would be charged with developing, planning, and executing policies and operations as assigned by the president as the NSD director.⁴² The NSD would be an organization within the Executive Office of the President and consist of five directorates: Crisis Management, Regional Affairs, Home Defense Affairs, Finance and Trade, and Science and Technology.⁴³ Although there are several inherent benefits to this structure, the most significant would be the NSD would be less bureaucratic and operate only by direction of the president and will facilitate an integrated domestic agenda, foreign policy, and NSS.

The creation of an NSD would be a significant departure from the current national security structure. However, the complexities and uncertainties of the geo-strategic environment will require organizational reforms that are more suitable to coordinating and integrating a NSS that will require foresight, innovation, and, more importantly, focused on national interests that are vital to the security of the United States. The Clinton administration's NSS appeared to occasionally be disjointed and questionably applied national resources towards policies the American public did not consistently perceive as vital to national security. The reforms proposed by the concept of the NSD are essentially an appeal to leadership, creating through a more agile and accountable organization the ability as well as the political and institutional imperative for the president to take the lead in forging a public consensus on national security affairs.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

In his inaugural address, President Bush addressed several aspects of the geo-strategic environment that will face his administration and conveyed an insight to what may be his vision of national interests and what he perceives should be the role of the United States in the international community during his administration. He highlighted the a formidable military to dissuade potential adversaries, a commitment to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, remaining engaged in international affairs, defending our allies, and safeguarding our national interests.⁴⁵ The president's comments indicate the United States will continue to maintain its role as the pre-eminent leader in the international community and address the challenges associated with a continually changing geo-strategic environment. To accomplish these endeavors, the Bush administration and nation, would be well served if the fundamental requirements of the Goldwater-Nichols Act are reviewed and, more importantly, become the foundation of the forthcoming NSS – identify only those interests that are vital to the national security of the United States.

The president, as delineated in the Goldwater-Nichols Act, has a twofold mandate pertaining to national security policy. He is tasked with identifying and articulating the national interests vital to the security of the United States and developing a strategy that will both achieve and advance those interests. The formulation of a strategic direction for national security is articulated in the NSS and comprised of three separate yet interrelated elements. First, it is essential to identify what constitutes the national interests that are vital to the security of the United States. The second element is to determine what elements of national power the nation is willing to commit to protect and safeguard these interests when threatened by conflict or crisis. Third, once the interests and threats are determined, the president must articulate their importance to the American people to ensure their resolve and support in the event a crisis arises and the national leadership undertakes decisive action.

The nation is currently experiencing a strategic pause that affords the opportunity to review national security policies and organizations that will better address the challenges of the future. As the only remaining superpower, the United States has far-reaching global interests and the potential to become involved in a myriad of foreign policy issues or crises that may not be vital to our national security. The implication of continuing a policy that seeks to defend all interests rather than those vital to national security is an impossible endeavor given limited national resources. Therefore, our national leadership should formulate a focused and coherent strategy that commits resources towards interests that are determined to be vital to the national security. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) underscores this opinion suggesting that not all perceived interests are of equal importance and the United States should apply the limited resources where they will have the greatest impact over the long term.⁴⁶

As stated above, the NSS is the primary forum for the president to convey his vision for the national security to the American public. It is also the main document for the Congress and federal agencies to utilize as executive guidance for the formulation of domestic and foreign policy to develop the "ways" and "means" to achieve the nation's "ends" in the context of national interests. Furthermore, the NSS provides our allies, adversaries, and potential adversaries with a document that delineates those areas that the United States considers important as both a nation and a member of the international community.

The significance of the NSS is that it identifies to the nation and international community what the United States considers to be its national interest and to what extent it will employ its elements of power to advance and safeguard them. The inherent value of clearly defined national interests is that it conveys to the American public and international community the

willingness of the nation to commit its blood, treasure, time, and energy to answer the fundamental but essential question -- "What are we willing to die for?"⁴⁷

Word Count = 6017

ENDNOTES

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