NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

A SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHING?

The May 1997 National Security Strategy

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Course 5601

Seminar H

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Report Documentation Page	*Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188*

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1. REPORT DATE **1998**	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-1998 to 00-00-1998**
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing? The May 1997 National Security Strategy**		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER 5b. GRANT NUMBER 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)		5d. PROJECT NUMBER 5e. TASK NUMBER 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **National War College,300 5th Avenue,Fort Lesley J. McNair,Washington,DC,20319-6000**		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT
see report

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**		**7**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

A public document such as the National Security Strategy, particularly during an interregnum, severely mutes controversial issues, structures content to appeal to the broadest possible audience, and chooses semantics based on "universal" values The Strategy has left me with a vague disquiet which ultimately coalesces around two leitmotivs One is the blurring of the distinction between domestic policy and foreign policy and the other is disguising a symmetrical approach behind asymmetrical rhetoric As a result of the interaction of the two leitmotivs, I find the Strategy flawed in identifying transnational threats which are of vital or even major interest and in choosing appropriate instruments of statecraft

A Domestic or Foreign Policy Strategy? Asymmetry or a symmetry?

The Clinton administration's intentional blurring of distinctions between domestic policy and foreign policy continues a post-World War II trend of conceptually identifying national interests in domestic or public interest terms (within territorial boundaries as opposed to the well-being of American citizens and enterprises operating outside territorial boundaries, a more traditional definition of national interest) [1] In the absence of a single clear external threat, Americans are largely focusing their attention on domestic concerns Faced with this relative disinterest toward foreign policy on the part of the public whose interests national security strategists are organizing to defend, it is a pragmatic, logical and eminently politically acceptable tactic to garner support by casting

[1] Donald E Neuchterlein, "National Interest as a Basis for Foreign Policy Formulation," excerpts from Chapter 1 in *America Overcommitted United States National Interests in the 1980s*, (Lexington, KY University Press of Kentucky, 1985), page 6 (Reprint)

national and strategic interests in public interest terms Theoretically, integrating the two facets should strengthen a strategy's ability to minimize both cost and risk

Unfortunately, theories are not laws In the May 1997 National Security Strategy, the analysis and practice of integrating public interest and strategic concerns lead to two very negative consequences which mutually reinforce each other in undermining the very intent of the strategy The first of these is a mismatch of statecraft instruments to threats The second is a misreading of the intensity of the threat from a national security policy perspective, i e , is the threat is vital, major or peripheral

The Strategy clearly wants to project a cost-averse, asymmetrical approach By identifying a relatively few threats and referring to balancing the budget, the Strategy attempts to present itself along traditional criteria for asymmetric realism Arguably, though, the Strategy presents a plethora of threats, a richness compounded by the lack of clear criteria to determine the critical threshold for a country or area's inclusion within the threat's parameters This can and often does lead to proliferation rather than constraint This broadening rather than narrowing of involvement is aggravated by the pandering to a domestic-focused audience, leading the analysis, as presented, to mask the level of threat and our ability to do something about it

Transnational Threats

I would like to examine the two leitmotivs against the canvas of three specific transnational threats identified in the Strategy terrorism, drugs and organized crime As a basis for analysis, I applied Neuchterlein's matrix for differentiating between intensity of threat and criteria[2] for discriminating between vital and major priorities

Terrorism

	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of Homeland		X 1, 2	10, 11	
Economic Well-Being			9, 13	X 3
World Order		X 6, 12	8	
Promotion of Values			X 5	

Drugs

	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of Homeland		1	X 10, 2	
Economic Well-Being		11	9, 2	X 3
World Order		12,11	7	X 8, 13
Promotion of Values			10, 2	X 16,7

Organized Crime

	Survival	Vital	Major	Peripheral
Defense of Homeland		9, 10	X 2	1
Economic Well-Being			X 3, 13	11
World Order		X 8, 7, 5, 6	7	12
Promotion of Values			X 13	

[2] *ibid*, pp 8, 14-28 1 Proximity of danger, 2 nature of threat, 3 economic stake, 4 sentimental attachment, 5 type of government & human rights, 6 effect on balance of power, 7 national prestige at stake, 8 support of allies, 9 economic costs of hostility, 10 estimated casualties, 11 risk of protracted conflict, 12 risk of enlarged conflict, 13 cost of defeat/stalemate, 14 risk of public opposition, 15 risk of UN opposition, & 16 risk of Congressional opposition

To occupy the central place they do in the Strategy, a matrix of these transnational threats should show a majority of "X"s, at a minimum, in the Major column, if not a preponderance in the Vital column Using domestic interests as the primary filter, drugs and possibly organized crime might generate such a matrix I am less convinced that the general public would see terrorism, other than the home grown variety (a la Veigh), as falling into the Vital or Major columns From a national security perspective, however, terrorism (a la World Trade Center or Pan Am 103) could easily have a preponderance in the Vital or Major column

Developing subsequent plans[3] after using Neuchterlein's matrix to determine the intensity of the threat and then comparing the results against potential statecraft instruments affects choices among the instruments A domestic filter when developing a strategy for dealing with the drug problem pushes the strategist toward a supply-side solution involving compellence at a high cost (throwing good money after an irrational objective squanders limited foreign aid[4], greater involvement of higher numbers of military as well as civilian personnel), prestige, support of allies, enlargement of conflict (there are a lot more countries involved in the drug trade since the U S intensified its interdiction efforts aimed at entry), potential casualties (DEA officers, coast guard and other military personnel, police), and maintenance of the status quo A foreign policy-oriented national security filter, such as in my version of the matrices, indicates that drugs in an asymmetrical

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[3] Terry L Deibel, "A Design for National Security Strategy," Lecture Outline, 1997

[4] Coca substitution is an economically irrational response on the part of Latin American growers Without elevated levels of costly coercion complemented by a strong subsidy program—be it US foreign aid directly to farmers or budget support to their governments for the subsidies, a crop substitution program will not work

strategic approach are a Peripheral interest at best—the supply-side approach makes the costs questionable against other competing national security interests While reducing the cost of confronting the threat through a demand-side approach might bring a greater consonance between the domestic and foreign policy filters, no administration has seriously embraced such an approach which would involve a lot more public diplomacy (education, media approaches, structural societal change) within the U S and less of all other instruments externally With little evidence that the failures of current instruments will change, I question whether this threat should be in the Strategy at all Without the blurring of the domestic and foreign policy distinctions, I'm not sure that it would have been included

My matrices of the other two transnational threats came out rating them as at least Major threats My primary filter, however, was a foreign policy national interest one rather than a domestic one Criteria such as balance of power, types of government, national prestige, support of allies, economic costs, risks of enlargement of conflicts were more central to my analysis than they would have been with a more domestic filter Where the criterion fit both public interest and national interest filters, the intensity of the threats was significantly lower using the public interest filter

The more serious issue in examining terrorism and organized crime is the degree to which the camoflaged symmetrical approach results in misallocated resources through choosing less than optimal statecraft instruments, increases either risks, costs or both, and masks our ability, for cost and other reasons, to have any success We have, for instance, largely but not wholly isolated Libya, yet been unable to extradite the alleged Pan Am bombers Success? Failure? If it had been an Air France flight between Dakar and Paris, would an integrated domestic/foreign policy approach have resulted in terrorism being of such strategic interest? I would argue from a domestic perspective--no, from a national interest view—yes, but with caveats that we can do little unless we start addressing the political and equity issues that nourish the current generation of terrorists

Organized crime as a transnational threat also evolves differently if either strict asymmetrical criteria are applied in choosing instruments and resource levels or a narrower national interest filter is used A public interest filter appears to focus the Strategy on organized crime which affects our commercial and financial interests and the use of more purely economic statecraft instruments A narrower national interest filter would probably look at organized crime which affects the comity within multipolar blocs or along Huntington's fault lines The implications for choice of statecraft instruments are different as are the objectives which would be sought

In summary, the interaction of the two leitmotivs—the blurring of distinctions between domestic (public interest) and foreign (national security) policy and a camoflaged symmetrical approach—raise questions in my mind as to whether several of the identified threats would be as central to the Strategy if a narrower filter and stricter applicaton of asymmetry were applied I think not Nor do I think that the statecraft instruments would be the same or applied in the same way or degree I think the cost of the strategy would also be very different, with a better balance between cost and risk