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THE BUSH NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY:  
WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS ABOUT?

by

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## *Preface*

*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, released by President George W. Bush in September 2002, created more controversy than the strategy statements of any previous recent administration. The national security strategy statement is the administration's primary public expression of the nation's overall foreign policy and security goals. It informs the American public, our allies, and our adversaries as to what is important to the United States when it deals with the rest of the world. It also serves as the important foundation for other policy documents such as the National Military Strategy and the strategies for homeland security and for combating terrorism. The principle objective of this research paper is to inform the reader of the key aspects of President Bush's National Security Strategy (NSS). Areas for exploration include a brief history of the NSS, the lineage and evolution of the Bush Strategy, the preemption debate, and recommendations for future strategy documents. The result of this research will be a paper that will provide the reader, especially the military reader, with a thorough knowledge of the National Security Strategy, its major themes, and their implications.

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***Abstract***

President George W. Bush's *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS)* received more criticism after its release than the strategy statements of any previous president. The primary complaints were that the strategy attempted to impose American values on the rest of the world, sought to gain and maintain American strategic dominance, and was too aggressive. However, the Bush NSS is an assertive strategy that confronts the post-9/11 world head-on. It presents an integrated approach to dealing with those threats that relies on all elements of national power. A careful reading reveals that much of the strategy is not new policy. Promoting American values abroad is as old as the nation itself. Maintaining a preeminent place in the world has been a goal since the US inherited its position at the end of the Cold War. What is new in the document, and the main source of criticism, is the discussion of US intent to use preemptive action if required. Even preemption, although not as written policy, is nothing new to the US.

Through documentary research, this paper seeks to examine the purpose and history of the NSS, explain how the Bush strategy evolved, and discuss the preemption debate. It will also present a few recommendations for future strategy documents.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*History tells us that strategic thinking requires courage and perseverance: courage because it demands departures from mainstream thinking and perseverance because it takes time for institutional mainstreams to move and join the “discovered” innovative courses of thought.*

— Carl H. Builder

*The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, released by the Bush administration in September 2002, caused a level of debate not seen with the strategy documents of previous presidents. The document was bold and contained controversial elements that stirred the passions of politicians, pundits, and academics, igniting a sometimes-fierce debate among the differing foreign affairs ideologies and “schools of thought.” The range of the debate was extreme, ranging from those who believed the strategy was not aggressive enough at seeking out and eliminating terrorists throughout the world, to those who believed it was an expression of naked aggression by an America bent on world domination. As is typically the case, most of the arguments were oversold. When one examines the document in its entirety, compares it to the strategy documents of the past, and considers the illuminating words of administration officials, the George W. Bush national security strategy (NSS) is a reasonable document. It eliminates all remnants of past Cold War thinking and squarely addresses the security environment realized after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The national security strategy document is a statement of grand strategy. What exactly is strategy? It seems as though all scholars who study strategy must create their own definition. Carl von Clausewitz, author of *On War*, the classic 19<sup>th</sup> century book on strategy and war, defined strategy as “the use of engagements for the object of the war.”<sup>1</sup> Since most of those who write about strategy were brought up on, or are at least familiar with Clausewitz, his definition usually forms the basis for all others.

Clausewitz was writing specifically about war and his definition reflects that. Colin S. Gray, in his book *Modern Strategy*, augments the Clausewitz definition by calling strategy “the use that is made of force and the threat of force for the ends of policy.”<sup>2</sup> By including the phrase “and the threat of force,” Gray acknowledges that strategy is not exclusive to war. A nation might use the threat of war during peacetime to achieve its objectives. By including the word “policy,” he expands on Clausewitz’s “object” to emphasize the critical idea that the purpose of strategy is to accomplish a policy of some sort. Both definitions come up short when studying a nation’s grand strategy because both definitions seem to rely exclusively on the military instrument of power. However, Gray believes both his definition and that of Clausewitz both allow for easy expansion to encompass other instruments of national power.<sup>3</sup>

In their introductory chapter of the book *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley define strategy as “a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate.”<sup>4</sup> This definition may not thoroughly explain what strategy actually is, or what it is for, but it captures the critical idea that strategy is a process that must change and adapt as circumstances warrant. Strategy requires judgment and the

ability to consider the changing environment and adjust accordingly. There is an element of art to making strategy.

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, strategy is "The science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or a group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war."<sup>5</sup> This definition works. The terms "art and science" imply process and the notion that there is something more than simple logic and knowledge involved. The definition encompasses the non-military instruments of power, allows that nations may act alone or in groups, that the ends of strategy are the political objectives adopted by the actor or actors, and that strategy does not just apply in war. This simple and clear definition is perhaps the reason the DOD Dictionary of Military Terms borrows from it. The DOD definition, and by extension, the US government definition of a national strategy is "The art and science of developing and using the diplomatic, economic, and informational powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war to secure national objectives. Also called national security strategy or grand strategy."<sup>6</sup> Both Webster's and the DOD definition include a term essential to strategy, "employing" or "using." Strategy is neither policy nor the actual action taken to achieve the policy. It is an actionable plan of how to use resources to reach policy goals, what Gray calls "the bridge" between policy and action.<sup>7</sup>

Just as a plan never survives first contact with the enemy, a strategy never survives first contact with the future the strategy was based upon. So, rather than a concrete means toward realizing a policy, it must instead serve as an overall guide. Strategy is hard, both in its making and in its implementation. According to Gray, it is difficult to

make strategy for three reasons: first, because of its very nature, which endures through time and in all contexts; second, because of the multiplicity and sheer variety of sources of friction; and third, because it is planned for contexts that literally have not occurred and might not occur, i.e., the future has not happened.<sup>8</sup> It is perilously easy to strategize after the events are over, especially for those who did not have to carry out the strategy in the first place.

Once made, implementing strategy can be even more difficult. First, the strategist must relate the action to the policy. Second, strategy is complex by its nature. Every factor influences the other factors. Third, it is difficult if not impossible to train strategists. “No education system can put in what nature leaves out.” Fourth, because strategy encompasses all instruments of national power, as well as elements of the polity and the society, the maximum number of things can go wrong. Finally, the will, skill and means of an adversary are usually under recognized.<sup>9</sup>

Just as strategy is inherently difficult to make and implement, it is difficult to achieve consensus in a free society on what a national strategy should be. An administration cannot make a strategy document that enjoys the support of all domestic and allied constituencies. That is simply impossible. What an administration must do is create a strategy grounded in its values and one that is clearly articulated to the American public, our allies, and even potential adversaries. Colin Gray says, “...strategy should serve policy goals which are instrumental in relation to a polity’s broad vision of the desirable.” He explains that behind the grand strategic choices should lay the policy goals that constitute political guidance, behind which lie the nation’s vision of its role in the

world.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the foundation of strategy is vision. The Bush national security strategy document details the strategy and the vision behind it.

This paper examines the Bush national security strategy by first looking at the strategies of previous administrations required to publish a national security strategy document. Understandably, just as the world geo-political landscape has changed since the first national security strategy document was published in 1987, the various administration strategy documents have changed as each administration grappled with the changing security environment, especially after the end of the Cold War. However, there are also themes within the various published strategies that have remained the same. Chapter 2 will briefly explore the continuity and change among the various strategy documents. Chapter 3 reviews the evolution of the Bush national security strategy as it developed from the days after 11 September 2001 until its publication 1 year later. This chapter will examine the origins of these elements and who influenced them. Chapter 4 will look at the most controversial aspects of the current national security strategy, the so-called “Bush Doctrine.” Although only a couple of pages of the entire strategy document are devoted to the idea of preemptive action, this is the most controversial part of the document. Is there really a “doctrine” there, or has this part of the strategy been overhyped by proponents of the administration who want to present a tough appearance and by critics who want to accuse the administration of being rogue unilateralists? Finally, Chapter 5 will present the author’s view of the document, analyze the critiques, and perhaps presumptuously, make recommendations for future editions of this important document.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 128.

<sup>2</sup> Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, "Introduction: On Strategy", in Murray, Macgregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge, 1994), 1, quoted in Gray, 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1967), 2256.

<sup>6</sup> *DOD Dictionary of Military Terms*, n.p., on-line, Internet, 5 January 2004, available from <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>.

<sup>7</sup> Gray, 19.

<sup>8</sup> Colin S. Gray, "Why Strategy is Difficult," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 20 (Summer 1999): 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>10</sup> Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 20.

## Chapter 2

### **The National Security Strategy – History and Consistent Themes**

*“For much of the last century, America’s defense relied upon the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.”*

—President George W. Bush

Prior to evaluating the George W. Bush national security strategy, it is helpful to look at continuity and change in the various national security strategy documents from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush. Each administration had to deal with the world as they found it, and the national security strategies of each tell the story of how they reconciled the state of the world and their own philosophies on national security. From Ronald Reagan’s first national security strategy document to the most recent issued by George W. Bush, much has changed in the US approach to national security. However, much has remained the same.

In order to evaluate the Bush strategy, one must start from a common framework. This chapter will explain the origins of the NSS, and how its importance has grown. Since the NSS is not the only way an administration articulates its strategy, this paper

will briefly examine other strategy tools such as the Quadrennial Defense Review and major policy speeches. Finally, in order to provide the background necessary to evaluate the current document, the chapter will trace the main ideas consistent throughout previous administrations' strategies.

A formal national security strategy document is a relatively new development that grew more from budgeting and resource allocation concerns than any other reason. In 1986, President Reagan created the Packard Commission to study defense management. In an effort to establish firm presidential guidance for defense planning and budgeting, the commission recommended the president issue a comprehensive statement of national security objectives and priorities. Previously, the president provided strategic guidance through National Security Decision Directives (NSDDs) issued through the National Security Council (NSC).<sup>1</sup> These directives could come at any time and often had a ripple effect on the budgeting cycle, causing constant change throughout the process. Often, the haphazard method by which administrations issued directives failed to allow the Secretary of Defense sufficient time to affect the budget process, causing problems in implementing the directive.<sup>2</sup>

The Packard Commission sought to provide more continuity to the process. The commission recommended the President revise NSDDs and issue comprehensive defense guidance that would include a statement of national security objectives, a prioritization of those objectives, and a statement of major defense policies. Along with this guidance, the commission recommended the President issue provisional 5-year defense budget levels and direction to the Secretary of Defense to develop a fiscally constrained national military strategy to support the overall security strategy. In the commission's vision, the

President should provide an overall grand strategy. The Secretary of Defense, armed with the President's strategic vision, would provide the President with military strategy options from which to choose, which in-turn would provide the guidance for the defense budgeting process.

Although President Reagan implemented many of the Packard Commission's Interim Report recommendations through NSDD 219, he did not implement the requirement for a national security strategy document.<sup>3</sup> Congress decided to act to correct what they perceived to be a critical defense planning weakness. They included the requirement for a national security strategy statement as part of the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*. The major themes of the Goldwater-Nichols act were reformation of the Joint Staff and acquisition reform, but there was also an increasing concern in Congress that the defense establishment was planning without regard to budgetary constraints. This often resulted in defense planning documents that had no possible way of ever being realized because there would never be enough money to pay for them. Both Congressional Armed Services Committees were determined to address their perceived weakness in strategic planning. Increasing attention on strategy formulation became one of the eight stated purposes for the bill.<sup>4</sup>

Congress required the president to submit an annual report on the national security strategy. The document was to be submitted each year along with the budget, and was required to declare the national security strategy of the United States, including a comprehensive discussion of the following items:

1. The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States;

2. The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States;
3. The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1);
4. The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy;
5. Such other information as may be necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States.<sup>5</sup>

With the Goldwater-Nichols legislation, Congress required much more than the Packard Commission originally recommended. Where the Packard Commission was concerned with making the planning and defense budget planning process more efficient, Congress directed a document with a broader purpose. The requirement to discuss political, economic, military, and other elements of national power made the NSS much more than a budgetary planning document. Congress made the NSS a major policy document.

Don Snider, an Army officer involved in writing national security strategy statements during the Reagan and first Bush administrations, sees five purposes for the national security strategy statement. First, it is to communicate the executive branch's strategic vision to Congress in order to justify their request for resources. Second, it communicates the same vision to governments and non-state actors outside the United States. Third, is to communicate to certain audiences and supporters of the President who want to see their ideas become important public policy. Fourth, it builds consensus within the administration among the different elements of the executive branch who

believe it has immense value. Finally, as a presidential document, it contributes to the President's agenda.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to those in the administration and actors outside the United States, one cannot emphasize enough another purpose of the strategy statement, that of communicating to the American people. After the shock of 11 September 2001, the American people gained a renewed interest in the country's national security strategy. This is evident by the large amount of attention given to the September 2002 release of President Bush's National Security Strategy. The latest strategy document generated enormous publicity in the US press, foreign press, and in academic circles, and not just by people with expertise in national security policy. Lawyers, environmentalists, human rights advocates, and public health officials are just a few of the groups who showed an interest in the Bush strategy.

In addition to the national security strategy statement, other important documents help explain the Bush Administration's strategy. One of those documents is the Quadrennial Defense Review. Dissatisfied by the slow pace of change in defense strategy following the end of the Cold war, Congress mandated the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The QDR is intended to spell out national defense strategy consistent with the most recent National Security Strategy. It should define force structure, modernization plans, and a budget plan. It is also to include an assessment by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as to the military's ability to carry out its missions within the budget.<sup>7</sup>

The 2001 QDR is especially important in analyzing the George W. Bush NSS, because the review was accomplished prior to 11 September 2001. It was released only

days after the attacks and a full year prior to the NSS. The QDR helps us determine what strategic ideas were envisioned by the Bush administration prior to September 11th and what ideas were influenced by the attacks.

Just as important as a formal written expression of strategy, policy speeches and statements by the president and high-ranking government officials spell out strategy or explain the finer points of the written strategy document. This method of presenting strategy does not fulfill any Congressional requirements, but it informs the public of strategic decisions and allows for detailed clarification and explanations of previously written policy. For President George W. Bush, the most significant policy speech on national security was the June 2002 speech at the West Point graduation exercises, discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Although the 2002 National Security Strategy contains some new ideas, many of the key themes are present in the strategy documents of previous administrations. Overall, US national security has evolved gradually with few periods of radical change. If a nation is to pursue a strategy based on its national values, and if national values are core beliefs that should not change frequently, it is logical that a nation's strategy should not change much over a short period. As a result, US national security strategy has remained consistent, promoting American values yet adapting incrementally to a changing world.

The Reagan administration produced the first two national security strategy statements, both written in a firmly Cold War political environment. The first NSS in 1987 was hastily written on the heels of the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The document was a cold war strategy that emphasized the military instrument of power. Reagan's second strategy statement, issued in 1988, demonstrated that more time was

used in coordinating the strategy throughout the various government agencies. The document advocated a broad, values-based (human dignity, personal freedom, individual rights, pursuit of happiness, and peace and prosperity) strategy, incorporating all instruments of national power. Despite its basis in American values, it claimed to be realistic in its approach—dealing with the world as it is, not how we might wish it to be. It went beyond its predecessor by looking at threats in various regions, as opposed to a singular focus on the Soviet Union. The objectives of the strategy were: (1) maintain security, deter aggression; (2) meet the challenges of a global economy; (3) defend/advance democracy; (4) resolve regional disputes that affect US interests, and; (5) build friendly relations among nations that share US concerns while making international institutions more effective. The 1988 strategy report incorporated two important changes. Not only did it discuss the non-military elements of national power, it also separated the world into regions and presented an integrated strategy for each.<sup>8</sup> Ronald Reagan laid a foundation upon which future strategies would be built.

The administration of President George H. W. Bush was the first to wrestle with the end of the Cold War and the enormous strategic changes it brought. The first Bush administration did not release a strategy document until March 1990, more than a year after taking office. The administration was struggling to deal with the whirlwind of global change brought about by events in Eastern Europe. The document was more a reflection of contemporary events than a real vision for the future, and despite the changing global political situation, it changed little from the Reagan years.<sup>9</sup> In 1990, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were in turmoil and the document grapples with this reality.<sup>10</sup> The goals of the strategy were: (1) ensure the survival of the United States by

detering aggression; (2) a healthy US economy; (3) promote democracy and human rights, and; (4) work with allies. The document once again contained regional strategies and divided action into political, economic, and defense agendas, in that order.<sup>11</sup>

The 1991 NSS was again written in a time of rapid world change. The administration was still grappling with the changes in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. War in the Persian Gulf region also led to delays in the document's release. Despite these changes, the administration made a real effort to confront the new world order. The document fully embraced a regional focus toward military security. Politically, the NSS called for expanded roles for the United Nations and emphasized the stabilizing effects of democracy. It also introduced the issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, identifying it as a threat. The document gave greater emphasis to economics and its role in national security even though there was little discussion on specifics of domestic and international economic measures.<sup>12</sup>

As one might expect, a change in both presidential administrations and the party in control caused a change in national security focus. The Clinton Administration had difficulty producing its first NSS document. The process took 18 months, going through 21 drafts from early 1993 to its publication in June 1994. Among the reasons for the long delay was a lack of guidance, political infighting, shifting priorities, and multiple restarts. Again, a changing reality of foreign affairs, unanticipated by the administration, continued to be a common theme.<sup>13</sup>

The first Clinton NSS provided a significantly different vision for national security. In an environment where there were no perceived threats to the US physical security, the administration defined security as "protecting our people, our territory, and our way of

life.” *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* advocated a proactive role for the US in various world regions (engagement) and the role of the US in promoting democracy abroad (enlargement). It clung to the mission of nuclear deterrence and addressed the military role in countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). *Engagement and Enlargement* emphasized the economic component of national power but maintained an emphasis on military power.<sup>14</sup> Its goals were ready military forces (states that US forces are the best in the world and implies they should stay that way), economic revitalization, and the promotion of democracy. The administration planned to accomplish these goals by enlarging the community of market democracies, and by deterring and containing threats. In the *Engagement and Enlargement* strategy, the primary potential threat was the regional nation-state with interests opposite our own. Other threats listed are WMD and “transnational phenomena” such as terrorism, narco-trafficking, refugees, natural resource issues, and information system attacks. Noteworthy is the statement in the text addressing the use of military power to defend America’s vital interests that states, “We will do whatever it takes to defend these interests, including—when necessary—the unilateral and decisive use of military power.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1995, the Clinton administration updated the previous year’s NSS. Although there were minor updates justifying recent military actions in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, it maintained the same vision first articulated in Clinton’s 1994 strategy statement.<sup>16</sup>

The first significant strategy adjustment for the Clinton administration had to wait for his second term. Titled *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, the document focused on a new world of uncertainty and change, finally leaving the Cold

War era behind. It cites such threats as ethnic conflict, outlaw states, terrorism, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The strategy statement emphasized all elements of national power and aimed at six priorities: a peaceful, undivided, democratic Europe; a stable, prosperous Asia-Pacific community; a prosperous global economy; America as an unrelenting force for peace; strong efforts to counter weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international crime, drugs, illegal arms trafficking, and environmental damage; and maintaining and gaining the military tools needed to meet priorities one through five.<sup>17</sup>

During the remainder of Clinton's second term, there was very little change in his national security strategy. The 1998 NSS adjusts a few of the previous six strategies into four by combining items. There are again few changes to the Clinton administration's second-term strategy theme. The 1999 strategy document presented another minor re-whickering of the priorities. The "engagement" theme remains, as does the desire to promote democracy and prosperity.<sup>18</sup>

The first national security strategy of the George W. Bush administration was 3 months overdue when the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 occurred. The strategy document that emerged a year later, in September 2002 was one that, in the words of John Lewis Gaddis, "could represent the most sweeping shift in U.S. grand strategy since the beginning of the Cold War."<sup>19</sup> A response to the new geopolitical landscape made evident by the terrorist attacks, it identifies terrorism as the greatest threat to the US. The Bush strategy is an integrated approach calling for the US to promote freedom and democracy throughout the world, work closely with allies, promote free market

economics, help the developing world, and prevent enemies from threatening the US and its interests, even if required to use unilateral preemptive force.

The Bush strategy fully embraces the idea that failed states and terrorists are the primary threat to US security, not other nation-states as stated in previous strategy documents. Although it still acknowledges multilateralism as the most desirable way of doing business, like Clinton's *Engagement and Enlargement* yet much more forcefully, it states the US will act alone if required. It overtly articulates the will to use preemptive action against terrorists when they intend to do harm to the United States.<sup>20</sup>

The 2002 Bush strategy is controversial but few of its ideas are radical or new. It maintains the goal of spreading democracy first expressed by President Reagan. It advocates military preeminence, first touted (though indirectly) by President Clinton. In addition, it advocates unilateral preemptive military action if necessary, a view expressed by previous administrations, just not in written form in a major policy document. These are not the only three elements of the Bush strategy. It is a much more substantive strategy than these three elements indicate. It may be bold and controversial, but a careful reading reveals that it has more in common with the strategy statements that preceded it than one might think.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> These directives were called by other names depending upon the administration in power. For example, National Security Council (NSC) 68 was issued under the Truman administration.

<sup>2</sup> David Packard, *Report of the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management*, (Washington DC, 1986), 11, on-line, Internet, 10 November 2003, available from <http://www.ndu.edu/library/pbrc/36ex2.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup> James R. Locher III, *Victory on the Potomac: The Goldwater-Nichols Act Unifies the Pentagon* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 441.

## Notes

<sup>5</sup> *National Security Act of 1947* as amended by the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, U.S. Code, 50 USC 402, sec. 104.

<sup>6</sup> Don M. Snider, "The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision" (student paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 15 March 1995), 5.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey D. Brake, *Quadrennial Defense review (QDR): Background, Process, and Issues*, RS20771 (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 21 June 2001) 1.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Reagan, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington DC: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1988).

<sup>9</sup> James M. Smith, "US National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy in the Post-Cold War World: Continuity and Change" (paper provided by the author, director of the USAF Institute of National Security Studies, USAF Academy, Colorado), 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> George Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States: 1990-1991* (Washington DC: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1990) 7.

<sup>12</sup> Smith, 4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (Washington DC: The White House, February 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Smith, 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," *Foreign Policy*, Nov-Dec 2002, 1, on-line, Internet, 20 January 2004, available from [http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_dls/m1181/2002\\_Nov-Dec/94129194/print.jhtml](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m1181/2002_Nov-Dec/94129194/print.jhtml).

<sup>20</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC, September 2002), 6, on-line, Internet, 8 August 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>.

## Chapter 3

### The Bush National Security Strategy

*Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors liberty. We will defend the peace against the threats from terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent.*

—President George W. Bush

President George W. Bush's *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* met with more attention than any other NSS since they first appeared in 1987.<sup>1</sup> How did the Bush National Security Strategy evolve into the document that was released in September 2002? The focus of this chapter is to look at the key points of the Bush NSS. These key points gradually became visible through the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and the various policy speeches leading up to the release of the NSS. Several important elements of the Bush strategy also have a legacy in the strategies of previous administrations. Considering previous administration strategies and the post-9/11 geopolitical environment, the Bush strategy contains ideas that should have been a surprise to no one.

From its origins in 1986, the NSS has gradually evolved from a purely Cold War document, dominated by concern about the Soviet threat to a new, some say radically new, approach finally free of Cold War thinking. Between the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols

Act and the release of George W. Bush's first NSS, there were incremental changes away from a Cold War orientation. President Bush made the break final with the publication of *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, released 20 months after he took office and a full year after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. By examining the 2001 QDR and through various policy speeches, one could see hints to the content of the new strategy prior to its September 2002 release.

On 1 May 2001, the president spoke to the National Defense University (NDU) on the subject of missile defense. At the time, there was a great deal of public discussion about US withdrawal from the 1972 ABM treaty and the goal of the US to build an elaborate national missile defense system. The May 2001 NDU speech addressed missile defense and the desire to move beyond the ABM treaty. In addition to these subjects, the president indicated he was ready to think more forcefully about national security strategy. He called for fundamentally new thinking about deterrence. President Bush argued that new concepts of deterrence should be developed that rely on both offensive and defensive forces. These new concepts should reflect the current security environment. Even though he called for new security concepts, his remarks still reflected those of his campaign where he pledged a more humble foreign policy, remarking, "We must all look at the world in a new, realistic way, to preserve peace for generations to come."<sup>2</sup> Although it was not clear what the new concept of deterrence would consist of, the speech provided an indication the administration planned to break from the past in its security strategy. This early indicator would become clearer with the release of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).

The QDR process was brought about by frustrations in Congress over the slow pace of military reform and the lack of significant policy change after the end of the Cold War. The FY1997 Defense Authorization Act, signed by President Bill Clinton in September 1996, required each new presidential administration to conduct "a comprehensive examination of the defense strategy, force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget plan, and other elements of the defense program and policies...." Ultimately, the QDR is required to outline the definition(s) of the threat, the anticipated strategy to thwart the identified threats, and the force structure needed to implement the strategy.<sup>3</sup>

The QDR was the first published strategy document of the new Bush administration. The review was accomplished prior to 11 September 2001, but was released just a few weeks later on 30 September. In it, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged that the review and its report were completed prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> terror attacks on the United States. There are hastily written references to the terrorist attacks, but it is plain those events came too late to influence the main ideas for the QDR. However, Secretary Rumsfeld argued the attacks confirm the strategic direction and planning principles that resulted from the review. The report emphasized homeland defense, preparing for asymmetric threats, the need to develop new concepts of deterrence, the need for a capabilities-based strategy, and the need to balance the different dimensions of risk.<sup>4</sup>

The administration had already determined that failed states and asymmetric threats were the main dangers to the US, but September 11<sup>th</sup> influenced the document's description of the geopolitical environment. It identified as geopolitical trends such items

as the diminishing protection afforded by geographic distance and the diffusion of power and military capabilities to non-state actors.<sup>5</sup> The administration used these, along with other concerns, to support its call for military transformation, an effort that began when President Bush took office.

The foundation of the QDR is its statement of America's goals. The stated goals are "to promote peace, sustain freedom, and encourage prosperity."<sup>6</sup> Overall, the defense strategy created to support these goals is itself focused on four goals intended to guide the development of U.S. forces and capabilities, their deployment, and their use:

1. Assuring allies and friends
2. Dissuading future military competition
3. Deterring threats and coercion against US interests, and
4. If deterrence fails, decisively defeating any adversary<sup>7</sup>

The QDR firmly embraces dissuasion and deterrence, although as in President Bush's May 2001 NDU speech, it calls for a new concept of deterrence. Unlike the NDU speech, the QDR explains this new idea. The new concept of deterrence does not rely on the strategic forces of the past; instead promoting the forward basing of forces along with global intelligence, strike, and information capabilities. These forces would require non-nuclear capability for rapid strike throughout an adversary's territory, active and passive defenses, and rapidly deployable forces that can decisively defeat an enemy.<sup>8</sup> Also advanced in the document are other new deterrence tools like missile defense and counter-terrorist operations.

The QDR does not advocate a defense strategy of gaining and maintaining military supremacy over all other nations, something critics would see in the NSS. Instead, it seeks to maintain "favorable military balances" in critical geographic areas.

One could argue however, the idea of military supremacy is implicit in the goal of dissuading future military competition.

It is apparent that prior to 11 September 2001, the Bush administration established a defense strategy that was not radically different from the strategies of previous administrations. Like the administration preceding it, it saw as threats the weak or failing states where terrorism could gain a foothold. It still advocated democracy and economic freedom throughout the world. The administration planned to accomplish its goals through close cooperative action with allies. The “new concept of deterrence,” although an energized and more outgoing type of deterrence, was still deterrence.<sup>9</sup> The events of 9/11 changed everything.

A new strategy evolved after the devastating terror attacks in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania. By 20 September 2001 in a speech to a joint session of Congress, President Bush stated, “We will come together to give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to track down terror here at home. We will come together to strengthen our intelligence capabilities to know the plans of terrorists before they act, and find them before they strike.”<sup>10</sup> This statement indicates that the administration was not satisfied with merely responding to terrorists attacks. It intended to prevent them whenever possible. This theme continued to develop as the months passed and the administration refined its new strategy.

In November 2001, the president addressed the Warsaw Conference on Combating Terrorism. The Warsaw speech came at a time when US and international forces were engaged in Afghanistan against the Taliban and instruments of the Al Qaeda terrorist network. It was also delivered in the midst of the deadly anthrax attacks in

Washington D.C. In his remarks, he expanded his notion of preventing the actions of terrorists before they strike. He explained that Al Qaeda sought chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and had to be stopped before they acquire weapons of mass destruction (WMD). A terrorist group with WMD was the nightmare scenario for US planners. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, a terror strike with WMD was not hard to imagine and the administration was intent on informing the public that it would take any means necessary to prevent its occurrence.<sup>11</sup>

President Bush hinted at a new willingness to act preemptively in his first State of the Union address after the attacks. In this now famous “Axis of Evil” speech, the president outlined his fears that rogue regimes such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq could threaten the US or our allies with WMD, or even worse, provide those weapons to terrorists who had little to lose in their use. Faced with a nation still reeling from the attacks, he expressed what he saw as his highest responsibility, protection of the nation from external attack. He presented a proactive defense message: “I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.”<sup>12</sup> Where the QDR listed failed states and asymmetric threats as the United States’ greatest hazard, the State of the Union Speech clarified the threat to include rogue states with WMD and terrorist organizations they sponsor.

The most significant pre-NSS defense speech took place on 1 June 2002 at the graduation exercises of the US Military Academy at West Point. By this time, the administration had solidified its strategy and key elements were revealed in the speech to

the West Point cadets, soon to embark on their military careers. The West Point speech was essentially the upcoming NSS in a nutshell. Using some of the same language that would appear in the NSS a few months later, the president presented the American goals to defend, preserve, and extend the peace.<sup>13</sup> To defend the peace, the president built the case that containment and deterrence, while still key elements of US strategy, could not work against terrorist networks that can neither be deterred nor contained. Instead, the president outlined his intent to take the battle to potential enemies and confront them before the threat had time to fully emerge, even if it required the US to act in a unilateral preemptive action. To preserve the peace, the president intended to limit military competition that so often caused instability in the past. To accomplish this required the US to maintain “military strengths beyond challenge.” This, in theory, would make pointless the arms races of the past and deter others from limiting trade and becoming barriers to peace. In addition, preserving the peace also required cooperation among the great powers who share common values and the goal of a peaceful world. The final goal, extending the peace, could not be achieved without the advancement of democracy, freedom, and human rights. The president argued that the last century ended with an unquestionable model of human progress, a model that included such things as the rule of law, religious tolerance, respect for women, free speech, and private property rights. He advocated focusing international aid, diplomatic efforts, and all manner of US assistance in ways that encourage nations that strive for these values, and to discourage those that do not.<sup>14</sup>

It is perhaps because of the West Point speech and the way it was organized that most analysts, and especially critics of the administration, latched onto what some called

the three “pillars” of the Bush NSS: unilateral preemptive doctrine, military supremacy, and promotion of democracy. However, when one actually reads the Bush NSS, it is not as simple as that. In fact, the NSS lays out a vision for America’s place in the world and no less than eight “pillars” of action supporting that strategy. Taken as a whole, the strategy is rational and conventional with the only truly radical portion being the few paragraphs devoted to defending preemptive action. Even that, as explained in a later chapter, is not new.

Any strategy for national security should have as its foundation a nation’s vision of its place in the world. The president expressed his vision on the first page, where he states, “The U.S. national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests. The aim of this strategy is to help make the world not just safer but better.” To achieve this vision, the NSS states broad and overarching goals: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity. To achieve these goals, the NSS advances eight specific objectives:

1. Champion aspirations for human dignity
2. Strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends
3. Work with others to defuse regional conflicts
4. Prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends, with weapons of mass destruction
5. Ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade
6. Expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy
7. Develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power
8. Transform America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century<sup>15</sup>

Very few of these objectives should come as a surprise to anyone reading the NSS. Most readers will recognize the concepts from past NSS documents, not to mention

from a long US tradition in global affairs. The idea of being a champion for the aspirations of human dignity first appeared in Ronald Reagan's 1988 national security strategy. Defusing regional conflict, igniting new economic growth, building the infrastructure of democracy, cooperative action with other main centers of power are all consistent themes from past strategy documents. Even preventing our enemies from threatening us with WMD is not a new idea.

What is new in this document is the emphasis placed on certain threats and the lengths to which the administration will go to deal with the threats. There is nothing surprising about the objective to strengthen alliances to defeat a threat and prevent attacks against the US and its friends. However in this case, the threat is specifically stated as global terrorism, and the means of preventing attacks includes, among all other tools of national power, preemptive attack. The notion of preventing our enemies from threatening the US, our allies, and our friends, with weapons of mass destruction is also not a new one, but in this case, it is raised to the level of being a primary objective of the strategy. This section of the document is where the main argument for preemptive action lies. Finally, what is truly new in the NSS is the emphasis placed on transformation of the military to deal with the current strategic environment. Prior to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, this was where the Bush administration was making news. Transformation was the primary focus of the 2001 QDR and the administration plainly sees it as critical in security in the post-9/11 security environment.

What is missing from the document is also worthy of discussion. Military primacy is included by many analysts as a key provision of the NSS. However, given the lack of attention given to it in the NSS, it can hardly be considered a key element. The

final section of the NSS contains the Bush objective of transforming the military. The section deals with procuring the best technology, overseas basing, innovation and experimentation, and defending the homeland. Extra emphasis is placed on improving intelligence capabilities and the role of diplomacy. There are only two sentences devoted to keeping the US military the preeminent military force in the world. The NSS states, “We will maintain forces sufficient to support our obligations, and to defend freedom. Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States.” It is clear that the Bush administration intends on keeping the United States military the best in the world, and the president emphasized this very issue in his West Point speech. It is also clear the administration believes that maintaining the US military as the best in the world will decrease military competition. However, many presidents have touted the US military as the best force in the world and most nations desire to limit military competition. Any president who came to office in a world where the US had the world’s strongest military would want to maintain that advantage.

Overall, the Bush NSS is a balanced document. There is far more attention devoted to promoting human rights, developing free markets, and tailoring foreign aid than there is devoted to preemptive military action or dominating military forces. Multilateralism is stressed above all but there are careful clarifications that the US is ultimately responsible for its own security and will act alone if required. It relies heavily on the economic instrument of national power and emphasizes the role of law enforcement, foreign aid, and the promotion of democracy. It makes clear the US cannot afford to suffer another catastrophic terrorist attack and that the nation will act if

threatened, even if that action is preemptive. Critics sum up the “Bush Doctrine,” as unilateral preemptive doctrine, military supremacy, and democracy promotion. It does not even require careful analysis to arrive at the conclusion that this characterization is an over-simplification. The NSS plainly states it values a multilateral foreign policy where the US will act alone only if absolutely necessary. Military supremacy is something the US was left with after the end of the cold war. Seeking to maintain supremacy and transform the military into a more relevant force order to suppress military competition seems more sensible than radical. Moreover, promoting democracy in order to address some of the underlying conditions that lead to failed states and threats to the US is hardly a new idea.

What is so controversial about the Bush national security strategy? It boils down to preemption. Preemption implies unilateral action since it is believed most countries in the world do not support the preemptive use of force. Preemption implies military supremacy because if the US were not the preeminent power, a stronger power could prevent preemptive action. As a result, the perception endures that the Bush NSS is based solely on preemption. Preemption is not the bedrock upon which the NSS rests, but it is the foundation of the criticism aimed at the document. The next chapter examines the preemption debate in more detail.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A Lexus-Nexus search of newspapers, magazines, and journals for the 1-year period following the release of every previous national security strategy statement produced no more than two articles each. A search for the year following the release of the George W. Bush strategy produced dozens of articles.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President to Students and Faculty at National Defense University,” Washington D.C., 1 May 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, 6 November 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/05/print/20010501-10.html>.

## Notes

<sup>3</sup> Daniel M. Smith, “Coming Clean on the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review,” *Center for Defense Information*, 7 June 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, 19 December 2003, available from <http://www.cdi.org/issues/qdr/comingclean060701.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington DC, 30 Sep 2001), v, on-line, Internet, 16 Oct 2003, available from <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/qdr2001.pdf>; Internet.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, there is one reference to preemption in the QDR. In Section VIII, Statement of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Henry H. Shelton states, “The US must deter, preempt, and defend against aggression targeted at US territory, sovereignty, domestic population, and critical infrastructure, as well as manage the consequences of such aggression and other domestic emergencies.” This statement was written after the September 11 attacks.

<sup>10</sup> George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People,” Washington D.C., 20 September 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, 9 December 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html>.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President To the Warsaw Conference on Combating Terrorism,” Washington D.C., 6 November 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, 9 December 2001, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/print/20011106-2.html>.

<sup>12</sup> George W. Bush, “The President’s State of the Union Address,” Washington D.C., 29 January 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 9 December 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/print/20010129-11.html>.

<sup>13</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy,” West Point, NY, 1 June 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/print/20020601-3.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: September 2002), on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>, 1.

## Chapter 4

### The Preemption Debate

*And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed. We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. So we must be prepared to defeat our enemies' plans, using the best intelligence and proceeding with deliberation. History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is a path of action.*

—President George W. Bush

The foundation of the controversy over the Bush NSS is its public pronouncement of the administration's intent to use preemptive military action if it deems it necessary. Beginning as early as the night of 11 September 2001, President Bush hinted at a policy that would come to be known as the Bush Doctrine. By the time the administration articulated its views on preemption in the June 2002 West Point Speech and again in the *National Security Strategy of the United States*, there had already been a flurry of articles by academics, diplomats, and political pundits on the policy's implications. What did this policy mean? Was it legal? Was it wise? How would the US look in the eyes of the international community? Although only a small part of the overall national security strategy, preemption has played a disproportionate role in the debate over the NSS. Preemption is an aggressive, proactive approach. It is risky both politically and in real terms with people and resources. The concept has garnered more than its share of attention since the summer of 2002, when President Bush announced the intent to use

preemptive action if necessary, i.e., the Bush Doctrine. This chapter examines the Bush Doctrine. It also examines preemption's place in international law and the historical US view toward preemptive action. Finally, this chapter will evaluate whether the frenzy over preemption was appropriate or if it was overblown.

There is no indication that the Bush administration intended any sort of controversial foreign policy when it came to power in January 2001. President Bush spoke during his campaign of limiting US involvement in nation building overseas. He spoke of transforming the military away from a Cold War force to one capable of protecting the US from a new kind of threat. The Quadrennial Defense Review, completed in 2001, relied on dissuasion, deterrence, and, if deterrence failed, defeating enemies. In fact, the most controversial national security issue was transformation, with frequent news stories of military resistance to the President's and Secretary Rumsfeld's proposed sweeping changes. The president's "humble" foreign policy and immediate plans for transformation ended on 11 September 2001. In his address to the nation on the evening of the attacks, it was obvious the US was going to take a more aggressive path. The President said the US would win the war on terrorism and would treat the nations who harbor terrorism the same as the terrorists themselves.<sup>1</sup> This was the first indication that the US national security policy was going to take a new direction, one born out of the shock of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and the necessity of dealing with the new threat. The offensive against Afghanistan began less than 1 month after the President's remarks and was considered by most experts to be justified. There was general satisfaction around the world that the terrorist attacks against the United States could be traced to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, actively harbored by the Taliban regime, and intending further

harm. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM was not considered preemptive, but a rational response to a legitimate threat.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the Bush Doctrine evolved in the months following 9/11. Dictionaries define doctrine as “a formulation of principles on which a government proposes to base its actions or policy in some matter, especially in the field of international relations.” So any policy statement is a doctrine in literal terms. But in the context of American foreign policy, both past and present, the term has been reserved for especially significant foreign policy statements; ones with lasting legacies. There is no disputing that the policy of preemption is a significant foreign policy position. But is preemption the foundation of the Bush foreign policy, and does the idea rise to the level of doctrine?

The term “Bush Doctrine” has been thrown around so much it has lost all meaning. As early as January 1999, journalists were using the phrase to refer to candidate Bush’s domestic political philosophy of “compassionate conservatism.” Once Bush became the Republican presidential nominee, the term was used by opponents to deride his stated goal of forming a realistic foreign policy while limiting overseas adventures. In January 2001, a Canadian journalist, reacting to the perceived snubbing of their prime minister during the first week of President Bush’s term, used “Bush Doctrine” to describe a systematic policy of turning against allies. When the pre-9/11 debate over missile defense began to heat up, again the term “Bush Doctrine” was trotted out to describe abandonment of the ABM treaty and the pursuit of an anti-ballistic missile system. Attributing the term “doctrine,” along with a president’s name, has become a convenient

tool for critics. It attaches greater importance to a policy than actually exists. However, critics are not the only ones who use this technique.

The term Bush Doctrine is also freely used by the president's supporters. Doing so attempts to convey a higher level of importance to the president's policies, like those of Monroe or Truman, whose specific foreign policy pronouncements left a lasting legacy. Candidate Bush's pre-election foreign policy statements were given the status of "doctrine" by supporters who wanted to contrast his vision with that of his predecessor. By the summer of 2001, Charles Krauthammer dubbed the new unilateralism emerging as "The Bush Doctrine." Of course, critics and supporters alike rushed to provide the implied status of "doctrine" to the post-9/11 policy regarding the use of preemptive force. After two years, all finally settled on a definition of "Bush Doctrine" upon which they could agree: it was a foreign policy where unilateral preemptive action is an openly stated policy option.

The concept of preemptive engagement is not a new concept in American foreign policy. Prior to the War of 1812, James Madison authorized military action in Spanish Florida in order to prevent the British from using the area as a base of operations. In fact, the Monroe Doctrine was an effort to preempt further European military action in the Western Hemisphere. The campaigns against the Plains Indians in the late 1860s were preemptive in nature. NSC-68, issued in 1950, justified the idea of a preemptive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union if it became known they were about to launch a strike against the US. The US intervention in Vietnam was an effort to prevent a "domino effect" in the region that would cause other nations to fall to communism. Finally, US action during the Cuban Missile Crisis, including the naval "quarantine," were aimed at

preventing Cuba and the Soviet Union from establishing the island as a base from which to launch medium-range ballistic missiles.<sup>2</sup> Although President Kennedy avoided war with the Soviet Union, he determined “we no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation’s security to constitute maximum peril.”<sup>3</sup>

Under international law, there is debate on the legality of the use of force in self-defense, especially preemptively. The United Nations Charter makes the use of force in the conduct of international relations an illegitimate act. Article 2(4) states: “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”<sup>4</sup> This charter article seems to rule out the use of force entirely. However, the UN Charter addressed the use of force in Article 51:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.<sup>5</sup>

Interpreted literally, it appears Article 51 allows a state to act in self-defense only after absorbing an attack and only until the UN Security Council decides to take control of the situation. Some international legal experts argue the drafters of the charter had this in mind, wanting the use of force in self-defense to occur only after an armed attack had already occurred. Others argued a customary right to self-defense already existed and that military preparations for attack are considered part of the armed attack, thereby

allowing an armed response before the attack is allowed to take place.<sup>6</sup> Sir Claud Humphrey Meredith Waldock said in 1952, “It would be a travesty of the purposes of the Charter to compel a defending state to allow its assailant to deliver the first, and perhaps fatal, blow...To read Article 51 otherwise is to protect the aggressor’s right to first stroke.”<sup>7</sup>

Supporters of this view also argue the UN Charter does not supercede previous notions of self-defense, particularly anticipatory self-defense. Prior to the creation of the United Nations, there was widespread acceptance of the idea that nations might act in self-defense by using force against imminent threats and that states retain the customary inherent right of anticipatory self-defense. This right has been commonly accepted internationally since a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century dialogue between US Secretary of State, Daniel Webster and British Foreign Minister, Lord Ashburton over the famous *Caroline* case. Webster’s definition of anticipatory self-defense was accepted by the British and became part of customary international law.<sup>8</sup> It allowed a nation to act against a threat if it was shown the “necessity of self-defense instant, overwhelming, and leaving no choice of means, and no moment for deliberation.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, a state may act preemptively against an imminent threat.

The Bush NSS attacks the preemption issue from the understanding that international law is not entirely clear regarding preemption and that concept of imminent threat needs to be adjusted. The nature of modern threats, particularly intercontinental ballistic missiles and WMD in the hands of terrorists, constitute a threat not foreseen in previous years. Indeed, international law evolves as the world changes and the NSS seeks to work within international law to make its approach legitimate. The NSS states:

For centuries, international law recognized that nations need not suffer an attack before they can lawfully take action to defend themselves against forces that present an imminent danger of attack. Legal scholars and international jurists often conditioned the legitimacy of preemption on the existence of an imminent threat—most often a visible mobilization of armies, navies, and air forces preparing to attack.

We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries. Rogue states and terrorists...rely on acts of terror and, potentially, the use of weapons of mass destruction—weapons that can be easily concealed, delivered covertly, and used without warning.<sup>10</sup>

International law must adapt to the modern reality of international terrorist organizations armed with technologically advanced weapons. In their 2003 article in the *Chicago Journal of International Law*, legal scholars Greg Travalio and John Altenberg support the idea that international law must adapt to new threats. They argue the circumstances of Webster's argument in the *Caroline* case should be adapted to the uniqueness of international terrorism: "Thus, a state may legitimately act on the assumption that, given the consistently demonstrated unconventional nature of certain international terrorist organizations, an attack by such organizations is always "imminent." If a terrorist organization has committed prior attacks, or has explicitly or implicitly announced its intention to do so, then any future attack can be considered imminent for purposes of the Webster standard."<sup>11</sup>

There is no doubt the Bush administration is attempting to broaden the concept of preemptive action and make it an acceptable policy option in the eyes of the international community. This necessity is brought about by the new strategic environment in which the United States finds itself. Dr Rice addressed this when discussing the National Security Strategy: "...But some threats are so potentially catastrophic—and can arrive with so little warning, by means that are untraceable—that they cannot be contained.

Extremists who seem to view suicide as a sacrament are unlikely to ever be deterred. And new technology requires new thinking about when a threat actually becomes “imminent.” So as a matter of common sense, the United States must be prepared to take action, when necessary, before threats have fully materialized.”<sup>12</sup> International terrorist organizations cannot be deterred in the conventional way. Combine this with the asymmetric threat of WMD in the hands of terrorists, and the resulting national security situation demands new thinking.

There are more recent public declarations regarding the need for unilateral preemptive action. By the end of the second Clinton administration, there was more and more acceptance that terrorism was the most significant threat of the future. The Clinton administration launched retaliatory and preemptive strikes on 20 August 1998 against terrorist training bases in Afghanistan and a “pharmaceutical” plant in Sudan the administration called an “imminent threat.”<sup>13</sup> In fact, they quietly pioneered the concept of unilateral, preemptive strikes against terrorists and WMD. Following the 20 August 1998 strikes, Secretary of State Madeline Albright defended US action. When asked if this was more preemption than retaliation, the Secretary expressed the desire to prevent future attacks. “We believe that the terrorist threat to the United States, our people, is a long-term threat that we have to deal with. We believe that we have a legal right to self-defense, and that is what we had stated. Under Article 51 of the UN Charter, we have a right to self-defense. As the United States of America, we have the right to self-defense when our people have been killed and when others have been maimed. We see this as a long-term struggle with terrorism.”<sup>14</sup> Secretary of Defense William Cohen spoke of the strikes as an indication of the way the US intended to combat terrorism in the future. He

said, “The U.S. strike against terrorist facilities in Afghanistan and Sudan should not be seen simply as a response to the Aug. 7 bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, but as the long-term, fundamental way in which the United States intends to combat the forces of terror. But terrorists should know that we will not simply play passive defense. America will defend itself and its interests through active measures such as the strikes last Thursday. As always, we will work with our friends around the world where we can, but we are also ready to act unilaterally when circumstances require.”<sup>15</sup>

The August 1998 strikes against Afghanistan and Sudan were a significant milestone in the US stance on preemptive action. Terrorism expert Raphael F. Perl, a researcher at the Library of Congress’ Congressional Research Service said, “This is the first time the US has unreservedly acknowledged a preemptive military strike against a terrorist organization or network.”<sup>16</sup> Perl argued this action might signal the US was taking a new direction in counter-terrorism, one less constrained when fighting terrorists, and their infrastructure. Although the US had bombed terrorist targets in the past, this was the first time the US publicly emphasized the preemptive rather than the retaliatory nature of the military strikes. National Security Advisor Sandy Berger characterized the administrations policy as “the long term fundamental way in which the United States intends to combat the forces of terror,” and noted, “we will not simply play passive defense.” In TV interviews, Secretary of State Albright said, “we are involved in a long-term struggle...this is the war of the future...” Berger stressed in public media appearances, “you can’t fight this enemy simply in defense. You also have to be prepared to go on the offense.”<sup>17</sup>

Perl characterized the Clinton administration terrorism policy as one which was: “(1) more global, less defensive, and more proactive; (2) more national security oriented and less traditional law enforcement oriented, (3) more likely to use military force and other proactive measures, (4) less likely to be constrained by national boundaries when sanctuary is offered terrorists or their infrastructure in instances where vital national security interests are at stake, and (5) generally more unilateral when other measures fail, particularly if other nations do not make an effort to subscribe to like-minded policies up front.” This type of policy indicated a shift from a long-term approach centered on diplomatic, economic and law-enforcement, to one centered on military power and covert operations.

The Clinton administration used much of the same justification later that year after a missile attack on Iraq known as Operation DESERT FOX. President Clinton justified the attacks in terms of preventing Iraq from developing and using WMD. He remarked a few days after the attacks, “We began with this basic proposition: Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to develop nuclear arms, poison gas, biological weapons, or the means to deliver them. He has used such weapons before against soldiers and civilians, including his own people. We have no doubt that if left unchecked he would do so again.”<sup>18</sup> Secretary Cohen spoke of the proactive nature of the action, stating, “We have an absolute obligation, indeed a duty, and we’d be derelict in that duty if we did not take action to interrupt those (terrorist’s) plans and try to insulate American people, and our friends from these activities...The only motivation driving this action today was our absolute obligation to protect the American people from terrorist activities.”<sup>19</sup> By the end of the Clinton administration, preemption was in practice, a firmly established policy.

The Bush administration was late to the idea of preemption as policy. The new emphasis on preemption was clearly a reaction to 9/11 and was solidified by June 2002. The US had to show it would be proactive in preventing future terrorist attacks. The president laid out his logic in a speech to the cadets at West Point, “We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the work of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferations treaties, and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.”<sup>20</sup> Reaction to the West point speech by foreign policy experts in the United States and around the world was immediate. Articles began to appear in newspapers, magazines, and professional journals analyzing the apparently new policy.

When the National Security Strategy was released in September 2002, the document was perceived by experts to be the codification of preemption as an official doctrine. In it, the administration argued that the spread of WMD presented an unacceptable level of risk when in the possession of rogue states, “and, as a matter of common sense and self defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.”<sup>21</sup>

The release of the National Security Strategy was followed by intense criticism by scholars, diplomats and politicians who latched onto the declaration that America would preempt threats to its security. The criticism ranged from “concern” by think-tank research fellows to outright hysteria by overseas scholars who saw it as a blueprint for world domination by the United States. In a Policy Brief by The Brookings Institution, Michael E. O’Hanlon, Susan E. Rice, and James B. Steinberg argued that the strategy raised preemption to the level of policy doctrine, reinforcing an image that the US was all too willing to act outside the bounds of international law.<sup>22</sup> Philip S. Golub, a French

journalist and lecturer, argued the US is now an empire reminiscent of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century engaged in a new effort at global expansion.<sup>23</sup> The predominant belief among critics was that the US had abandoned all previous efforts at deterrence for a new more aggressive policy, bound to make America the world's biggest bully.

Each overlooked the words the President was saying and what was actually written in *The National Security Strategy*. The President did not abandon the policies of the past in favor of preemption as some had argued. In his June 2001 speech at West Point, the President made it clear that the doctrines of deterrence and containment still apply. In fact, *The National Security Strategy*, highlights deterrence as a military priority along with the economic and diplomatic instruments of national power. In her December 2002 speech to the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Dr. Condoleeza Rice stated, "In fighting global terror, we will work with coalition partners on every continent, using every tool in our arsenal—from diplomacy and better defenses to law enforcement, intelligence, cutting off terrorist financing, and, if needed, military power... The National Security Strategy does not overturn five decades of doctrine and jettison either containment or deterrence. These strategic concepts can and will continue to be employed where appropriate."<sup>24</sup> It is clear that the administration does not see preemption as the new guiding doctrine of American foreign policy, but only one of many elements of national power it can use as it evaluates each international on its own merits. Despite what critics argue, preemption is only one of many tools reserved for the US in its national security efforts.

In the 18 months since the release of the National Security Strategy, the Bush Administration has employed it with mixed results. The most significant national

security event since the release of the Bush NSS was the war with Iraq, which began six months after the document's release. Unfortunately, the timing of the war obscures the balanced strategy of the NSS and reinforces the idea in the minds of critics that the NSS is too aggressive militarily and hinges on unilateral preemptive action. The war in Iraq, at least in the view of critics, overshadows the balance in the document and the reasoned approach it advocates. There have been successes since strategy was published. The United States removed the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, although not without straining existing alliances. It negotiated the dismantling of WMD programs in Libya and made some diplomatic progress with Iran and North Korea. It helped put a government in place in Afghanistan that so far seeks to be a champion for human dignity. It continues to seek to expand markets and trade relations and diffuse regional conflicts, although a settlement between Israel and the Palestinians still seems far away. Following the end of major conflict in Iraq, it is getting down to the serious business of transforming the US military.

Moving preemptive action from the realm of unwritten, but generally accepted policy, into the light of full-fledged overt policy option is a new approach born of the necessity created by international terrorism. The administration made clear it will prevent adversaries from gaining the capability to do harm to the US. It is important to note that, according to the NSS, this may or may not require the use of military force. However, many critics of preemption argue that articulating the policy so overtly increases the potential that the US will act too rashly in the face of threats to the US. The use of preemptive force has always been one of many options nations have for defending

themselves. Simply “saying it out loud” does not mean the US will choose this course before weighing all of its options.

Scholars and politicians can debate whether or not preemption is a new doctrine, whether it is legal or justified, and whether or not it hurts the US in the eyes of the world. However, one thing is clear. The administration takes seriously its obligation to defend the homeland and believes it must battle terrorists before the nation is attacked. The American people will not tolerate leadership that does not make every effort to prevent attacks before they occur and few Americans would demand that the nation absorb a terrorist attack before it could legitimately take action. The battle against terrorism should take place as early as possible and as soon as the threat is perceived, be it immediately before an imminent attack, or when the initial seeds are sewn. The Bush administration believes protecting the US from attack is its most solemn responsibility. They made clear they would use all tools available, from deterrence and containment, to law enforcement, diplomacy, and economic pressure, and if necessary, they will act to prevent attacks with military force. Every presidential administration has both a political and moral obligation to do so.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> George W. Bush, “Statement by the President,” Washington D.C., 11 September 2001, n.p., on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Record, “The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq,” *Parameters* 33, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 18.

<sup>3</sup> Scott D. Sagan, *Moving Targets, Nuclear Strategy, and National Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) quoted in Jeffrey Record, “The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq,” *Parameters* XXXIII, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 4-21.

<sup>4</sup> Charter of the United Nations, art 2(4), n.p., on-line, Internet, 15 December 2003, available from <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## Notes

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Graham, Jr., "National Self-Defense, International Law, and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 4.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Graham, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Graham, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Graham, 7.

<sup>10</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: September 2002), on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Greg Travalio and John Altenburg, "Terrorism, State Responsibility, and the Use of Military Force," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 116. The thesis of this article is as stated in the text above and specifically relates to terrorism. The authors oppose "an open-ended doctrine of preemption." They contend a classified appendix to the *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction* authorized preemptive strikes on nations and terrorists groups that are close to developing WMD or long-range missiles. They believe this is going too far and advocate a balanced approach of using law enforcement where appropriate and military force where justified. Interestingly, *The National Security Strategy* also advocates law enforcement where appropriate and preemption only when all other measures fail.

<sup>12</sup> Condoleezza Rice, "A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom," The 2002 Writon Lecture, The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 1 October 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 23 September 2003, available from <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/wl2002.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> William J. Clinton, "Address to the Nation by the President," Washington D.C., 20 August 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [http://www.state.gov/www/regions/africa/strike\\_clinton980820a.html](http://www.state.gov/www/regions/africa/strike_clinton980820a.html).

<sup>14</sup> Madeleine K. Albright, "Interview on ABC-TV "This Week"," Washington D.C., 23 August 1998, as released by the Office of the Spokesman, U.S. Department of State, n.p., Internet, 12 Dec 03, available from <http://secretary.state.gov/www/statements/1998/980823.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Secretary William S. Cohen, "We are Ready to Act Again," *Washington Post*, Sunday, 23 August 1998, p. C01.

<sup>16</sup> Raphael F. Perl, *Terrorism: U.S. Response to Bombings in Kenya and Tanzania: A New Policy Direction?*, 98-733F (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service-The Library of Congress, 1 September 1998), 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> William J. Clinton, "Remarks of the President on Iraq," Washington D.C., 19 December 1998, n.p., on-line, Internet, 15 December 2003, available from <http://clinton3.nara.gov/WH/New/html/19981219-2655.html>.

<sup>19</sup> William S. Cohen, "Cohen and Shelton Strike Briefing," Washington, D.C., 20 August 1998, n.p., online, Internet, 9 December 2003, available from [http://www.pbsorg/newshour/bb/military/july-dec98/cohen\\_8-20.html](http://www.pbsorg/newshour/bb/military/july-dec98/cohen_8-20.html).

<sup>20</sup> President George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy," West Point, NY, 1 June 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://whitehouse.gov/news/releases/>

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2002/06/20020601-3.html.

<sup>21</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: September 2002), ii, on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, Susan E. Rice, and James B. Steinberg, *The New National Security Strategy and Preemption*, The Brookings Institution Policy Brief #113 (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, December 2002), 2.

<sup>23</sup> Philip S. Golub, "Westward the Course of Empire," *MondeDiplo.com*, September 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 17 September 2003, available from <http://mondediplo.com/2002/09/03westward>.

<sup>24</sup> Rice.

## Chapter 5

### The Bush Strategy in Perspective

*The National Security Strategy does not overturn five decades of doctrine and jettison either containment or deterrence. These strategic concepts can and will continue to be employed where appropriate. But some threats are so potentially catastrophic—and can arrive with so little warning, by means that are untraceable—that they cannot be contained. So as a matter of common sense, the United States must be prepared to take action, when necessary, before threats have fully materialized.*

—Condoleezza Rice

Overall, the Bush National Security Strategy advocates a balanced yet resolute approach to US security in the current global strategic environment. As the world's lone superpower, the United States has no choice but to make the most of its strategic situation and use its strengths to advance the nation's goals of promoting political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and advancing respect for human dignity. This chapter will evaluate the major criticisms of the Bush strategy and provide an alternative view. This is not to say the strategy is perfect. The government can improve the way it approaches strategy and the national security strategy document. This chapter will close with some recommendations for future strategy documents.

When evaluating any administration's national security strategy document, readers must always keep in mind the first and most important audience for the national security strategy is the American domestic audience. Kenneth B Moss, associate dean for academic programs at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, argues that the

president's base of support comes from conservatives in the Republican Party. Many members of this constituency are nationalistic, they are not afraid to assert their pride in the US and its role in the world. They support a strong military, and do not want the US to compromise its sovereignty to international organizations like the UN.<sup>1</sup> If an administration is to have any hope of getting its strategy implemented, it must satisfy the administration's supporters in the Congress and within the American public.

Critics focus their attention on the NSS goals of spreading democracy, strategic and military supremacy, and the willingness to engage in unilateral preemptive action. The focus on these three areas obscures the other important elements of the Bush NSS. There are eight objectives in the strategy ranging from promoting human rights and advancing free trade to building strong alliances and transforming the US military. Naturally, the most attention is paid to the more controversial elements. It is difficult to tell whether these elements of the strategy get more attention because they are controversial or if they are controversial because so much criticism has been leveled against them. Let us examine each of the major criticisms in more detail.

The first of the three areas most criticized in the NSS is its quest to promote democracy around the globe. The strategy reinforces American's historical belief in the nation's special purpose in the world. It advances the universal appeal of American values. As stated earlier in this paper, this is a consistent theme since the first Reagan NSS. However, this theme was advanced much earlier in US history than the Reagan administration. According to Moss, "it is a challenge set forth in the Declaration of Independence and echoed by numerous presidents—Jefferson's "empire of liberty," Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, Woodrow Wilson in his vision for a postwar order

after World War I, Franklin D. Roosevelt in his “Four Freedoms,” or Ronald Reagan, when he invoked the Puritan-inspired image of the United States as a “city upon a hill.”<sup>2</sup> The US sees democracy and economic freedom as going hand in hand.

Promotion of democracy is an important element of the Bush strategic vision, as it has been since before national security strategies were published. However, critics argue it is too idealistic and does not acknowledge that other nations have different interests. The long-term goal of fostering democracy has served America well. History has shown a gradual trend toward freedom, the rule of law, minority rights, and free markets throughout the world. There should be no expectation that the process can be achieved in the short-term. The strategy does not declare an intention to fulfill its vision instantaneously. If the strategy truly articulates a long-term vision, the country can be patient regarding most of the strategy. The spread of these values has already shown benefits over the past several decades. The nuclear threat of the Cold War was extinguished with the spread of democratic and free economic ideas. There is no reason for the nation to believe the threat of terrorism and WMD cannot be reduced by the same means.

The second major criticism is that the Bush NSS supports the advancement of US strategic preeminence at the expense of the other world powers. They believe this will require US intervention at all times and in all places to advance its agenda. This is only true if the administration saw threats everywhere and sought to eliminate them immediately by military means. The administration has shown no tendency to do so. They made clear from the beginning they believe different threats require different approaches. On the one hand, the US used military force against Iraq only when 14 years

of diplomatic and economic measures failed to produce results. On the other hand, negotiations and sanctions have produced positive results in Libya and some positive movement with Iran. As for North Korea, the administration has used both economic and diplomatic measures. Where these efforts will lead remains unknown. It appears the Bush administration is using all its instruments of national power and is not intent on using military force in all places at all times. On the contrary, the administration has shown patience and a willingness to look at the world with a long-term view if threats do not appear to be immediate.

As discussed earlier, the NSS speaks barely a sentence about maintaining military and strategic supremacy. In the June 2002 West Point speech the president does say, “America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge.”<sup>3</sup> However, the US did not intentionally seek to build strategic and military preeminence, rather, it inherited it. When the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe collapsed as a collective superpower, the US was left standing alone as the world’s most powerful nation both militarily and economically. The question became what to do with that power. Why give up a position of preeminence when there are still threats against which the nation must be protected? Furthermore, if the political leadership does intend to act preemptively, it helps to be in a dominant strategic position, lest someone prevent you from pursuing your security interests. Administrations past and present have stated repeatedly that the US seeks no empire and no territory to conquer. The US seeks a world where all have the opportunity to prosper in a secure environment. Whether right or wrong, the NSS assumes its allies and other great powers accept, despite their rhetoric, that the US has benevolent intentions.

Finally, let us address the criticism that the strategy is too aggressive and seeks to act unilaterally and preemptively against all threats to security. Moss believes the US stance toward the outside world has always been a schizophrenic one. While the US believes the outside world can be changed for the greater good, it still believes the outside world should be feared. The US supports multilateralism and organizations such as the UN but jealously guards against giving up any amount of sovereignty or its ability to act alone if required. This concept is becoming harder to grasp by critics in Europe as they willingly give up sovereignty to the European Union.<sup>4</sup> Being suspicious of giving up sovereignty does not equate with unilateralism. President Bush, just as his predecessor did, made clear in the NSS, that the US prefers to work with allies, but will act alone if required. The same can be said of preemptive action. The preferred solution is to use all instruments national power--diplomatic, economic, and military--short of actual war, in order to prevent terrorists or rogue states from threatening the US. Preemption is a measure of last resort.

But why resort to preemption when the rest of the world seems so opposed to the concept? One cannot overestimate the impact 9/11 had on the Bush administration. Talk of preemptive action quickly came to rank equally with talk of dissuasion, deterrence, and containment, which prior to 9/11 were the cornerstones of the US security strategy, according to the 2001 QDR. The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks provided in many people's mind, irrefutable proof that terrorism could not be deterred or contained. Combine that notion with the horrific thought of global terrorists with WMD, and world became even more frightening to the Bush administration. The President understandably had to seek a strategy that would communicate to the American people he was not going to allow such

an attack again. Since it is impossible to defend every target of interest in a country as vast as the United States, there is little choice but to go on the offensive and strike terrorism first. It is easy to see how a leader would come to this solution.

When one plans for a problem, it is prudent to consider three scenarios: best case, worst case, and the most likely case. The most important factor in planning a course of action to deal with the problem is the amount of resources available. If the resources required for dealing with the problem are scarce or even absent, there is little choice but to hope for the best case because you cannot deal with the other cases anyway. If resources are available but limited, it makes sense to plan for the most likely scenario. In this case, since some resources are available, but not enough to deal with every contingency, they must be allocated for their most efficient use. It is logical to plan for the most likely scenarios. However, if the resources are available to handle the worst-case scenario, it makes no sense to hope for the best or plan for what is most likely. In this instance, leaders must plan for worst case because they can. When worst case becomes terrorists attacking the US or its vital interests with WMD, everything possible must be done to eliminate that threat, even if it means unilateral preemptive action. The cost of not doing so is too great and no prudent US leader will take that risk.

Even though it is the position of this paper that the Bush NSS is a reasonable, and realistic approach to US national security, there are areas of the strategy that can be improved. First, amend the requirement to issue a new strategy annually. The document should be required once at the beginning of each 4-year presidential term unless there are significant changes in the international security environment that require the president to change course. In practice, neither the Clinton nor the George W. Bush administrations

issued the report annually. Strategy should be composed of long-term vision and should not change every year unless there are significant world events, i.e., the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union or a 9/11 type event, that necessitate a change in direction. Producing a national security strategy requires many months and perhaps thousands of man-hours in preparation. Add to that the many months and man-hours in coordination and there is great wasted effort in issuing annual documents, especially if there is little change in the core of the strategy. Each administration could issue a new document if changes in the geopolitical environment necessitate a change in strategy, or if the administration changes its budget priorities.

Second, even though the statutory purpose of the NSS is to help in defense budget decisions, there should be more emphasis on all elements of national power. The Bush strategy talks a great deal about extending democracy and promoting economic development around the world. However, there should be more emphasis placed on how the nation will use diplomacy and economic power to achieve those goals. The national security strategy stands as the nation's overall grand strategy. The Department of Defense supports this grand strategy with a more detailed national military strategy. The US should consider that appropriate departments publish national economic, national diplomatic, and national informational or intelligence strategies.

Third, emphasize integration between all the elements of national power, i.e., the interagency process. The lack of integration is a continuing obstacle to formulating and executing an effective grand strategy. The various elements of national power must be used together to reach desired ends. In the past, the lack of integration between the government agencies overseeing the various elements of national power has led to a

reliance on the one element that is usually immediately available, military power. If the nation pursues an integrated policy toward a crisis region, it can draw on all elements of power to address the crisis.

Fourth, if the NSS is to be a guide for resource allocation, prioritize the objectives within the document. The extent to which the NSS helps in resource allocations is questionable. However, even in the post-9/11 security environment with so much spending on defense, homeland security, and intelligence resources, money is still limited. The US already has enormous budget deficits, so a prioritization of the nation's security goals is essential. If the NSS presents a "big picture" view of the nation's national security vision along with its prioritized objectives in fulfilling that vision, governmental departments can present budgets congruent with that vision and priority. Congress will also have a document more useful in making resource allocation decisions.

The National security Strategy of the United States of America published by President George W. Bush is a brief yet bold document. Major criticism has been leveled at the strategy by those who believe it is far too aggressive and alienates other nations, especially US allies. However, the document's first audience is a domestic one. The president issued a document that shows the American people he is prepared to do anything required, from fighting disease in Africa to confronting conflict in the Middle East. He also reassured his primary audience that he is not afraid to take action in the face of worldwide criticism if it he believes it will enhance US security. The Bush NSS presents the administration's values and vision forcefully and unapologetically.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Kenneth B. Moss, “The National Security Strategy of the Bush Administration,” address to Amerika Haus, Munich, Germany, 3 February 2003, n.p., on-line, Internet, available from [http://www.cap.uni-muenchen.de/aktuell/positionen/2003\\_04\\_us\\_strategy.htm](http://www.cap.uni-muenchen.de/aktuell/positionen/2003_04_us_strategy.htm), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President at 2002 Graduation Exercise of the United States Military Academy,” West Point, NY, 1 June 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/print/20020601-3.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Moss, 3.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions

*If the leader is filled with high ambition and if he pursues his aims with audacity and strength of will, he will reach them in spite of all obstacles.*

—Carl von Clausewitz

The 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* represents the most significant change in US grand strategy since the beginning of the Cold War. It is a decidedly post-Cold War and post-9/11 document. It unapologetically describes a vision based on American values then puts forth integrated goals and the objectives for reaching them. Its basis is a belief that the spread of democracy and free markets make the United States safer. Most significantly, it states that the US will aggressively work to prevent threats to the US and its interests, using all means available, including the preemptive use of force.

The public declaration of grand strategy is a relatively new phenomenon in US and world politics. The current NSS evolved not only from the strategies of the past, but was forged in the shock of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Despite what critics allege, the Bush administration did not react to 9/11 with an aggressive, one-size-fits-all strategy. Rather, the Bush administration built a strategy that addresses the world as it is and at the same time seeks to build a world as it can be. This combination of

realism and Wilsonian idealism unnerves those who see the world from either one perspective or the other.

Also unnerving to some is the inherent flexibility of the strategy. They see the different way in which the administration approached Iraq and North Korea as inconsistent. They also disregard most of the text and focus on the statements regarding the willingness to use preemptive force. This allows them to paint the strategy as relying solely on force and the threat of force. However, the facts presented by the strategy are at odds with these views. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said in a policy speech soon after the release of the NSS, “In fighting global terror, we will work with coalition partners on every continent, using every tool in our arsenal—from diplomacy and better defenses to law enforcement, intelligence, cutting off terrorist financing, and, if needed, military power.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet defeating terrorism is not the only focus of the Strategy. Of the eight goals expressed in the document, only two directly address the use of force: strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism, and prevent our enemies from threatening us with weapons of mass destruction. Five of the remaining six goals deal more with advancing human rights and using diplomacy, and economic means to enhance US security. The remaining goal addressed US military transformation.<sup>2</sup>

It is a simple fact that the world is radically different than it was during the 40 years of the Cold War. The threat is different. When an enemy declares its intentions and seeks the means to carry out those intentions, any state with the ability to prevent that enemy from carrying out those intentions is duty-bound to do so. Among the primary points here are the means. One will take the safest course if they have the resources to do

so. During the Cold War, the US did not have the means to eliminate the Soviet threat without causing grave damage to itself. Now, with the military preeminence it inherited after the Cold War, the US has the means to plan for the worst case and take the safest course of action to prevent the worst case from occurring. To do less would break a president's solemn duty to protect America and invite calls from the American people and from political rivals that he was not doing enough to keep the nation safe.

Has the Bush strategy succeeded in the first couple of years since its implementation? Afghanistan has a fledgling democracy. Saddam Hussein is out of power, but not without lingering controversy over weapons of mass destruction. Nonetheless, there are real efforts at creating a sustainable democracy in Iraq. Muammar Qaddafi voluntarily gave up his WMD program. Negotiations with North Korea and Iran progresses in fits and starts, but there is the potential for future agreements. The major European allies have joined the Proliferation Security Initiative and recently concluded an agreement to search ships with Liberian registry suspected of carrying WMD. Similar agreements will follow. There have been countless arrests of terrorists throughout the world and presumably, several major terrorist plots prevented. President Bush has not yet achieved his strategic vision, but there is progress. These are after all, long-term goals.

To ensure the successful implementation of its national security strategy, the US must do three things. First, stick to the principled approach. The NSS touts American values as a formula for success in the world. It does not say the rest of the world has to look like America. Individual freedoms, economic opportunity, and a say in ones government are objects of universal desire. Pursuit of these values has a direct impact on

US security since it narrows the pool of young potential terrorists from which terrorist groups can draw. Second, stick to the integrated yet flexible approach. Though critics do not acknowledge it, the Bush NSS is a well-integrated document that relies on agencies to work together, both internationally and within the US government. It advocates the use of all elements of US power, economic, diplomatic, military, and informational. This flexibility should not be confused with inconsistency. Most wrong are the critics who argue that the Bush strategy is inconsistent because the US sought regime change in Iraq by force of arms yet is not moving militarily to remove the North Korean regime. The flexible approach--evaluating each situation based on its unique facts and applying the best solution--is what prudent leaders do. Finally, stick to the plan. The strategy is coherent and principled and it deals directly with the problem at hand. Resist the temptation to change course in the face of strong criticism. The geopolitical environment is in constant change. Customary international law is in constant change. If the US sticks to its strategy, new ground will be broken in both of these areas.

The Bush national security strategy is a remarkably optimistic document. It lays out a plan to achieve US security while promoting freedom. It addresses the world as it is with an integrated approach to eliminating threats using all elements of US power. Today, the United States finds itself in a position of unprecedented strength with an unprecedented ability to shape its own security and its own future. The 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* presents a clear plan for achieving not only the security of the United States, but a freer and more secure world.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom,” The 2002 Writon Lecture, The Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 1 October 2002, n.p., on-line, Internet, 23 September 2003, available from <http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/wl2002.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: September 2002), 1, on-line, Internet, 16 September 2003, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>.

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