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**NATIONAL SECURITY 'STRATEGY: A  
FLAWED GUIDE TO THE FUTURE**

**POLITICAL SCIENCE '**

**MR FRED SMITH**

**MICHAEL B. LEAHY, JR, COL USAF  
SEMINAR 8**

**COL WILLIAM SULLIVAN, PRIMARY FACULTY ADVISOR**

**The Industrial College of the Armed Forces  
National Defense University  
Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. 20319-5062**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Department Reorganization Act of 1986 requires the executive branch to periodically provide written documentation of the United States National Security Strategy (NSS). The George W. Bush administration released its first NSS in September 2002. The NSS starts with a letter from the President and then is organized around nine primary objectives. The effects of 9/11 and the emphasis on global terrorism are unmistakable. The talking heads in the media who focused, their critiques on the overt statement of a policy of preemption missed the forest for the trees.

The Bush 43 NSS is an arrogant short-term military focused document that fails to provide a comprehensive strategic vision for applying all the elements of national power to protect and enhance our enduring national interests. This paper justifies that. critique by a discussion of misalignment between NSS goals and national interests, flaws with specific NSS objectives, and the need for a greater economic emphasis. Integrated throughout the discussion are general and specific ways to correct our approach to world affairs.

## DISCUSSION

The goals and objectives of the NSS must always be directed toward achieving the fundamental purposes set out in the Constitution: "provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity".<sup>1</sup> Stated another way, the NSS must directly support our enduring national interests. President Clinton correctly defined those national interests in his 1997 NSS:

Since the founding of the nation, certain requirements have remained constant. We must protect the lives and personal safety of Americans, both at home and abroad. We must maintain the sovereignty, political freedom and independence of the United States, with

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<sup>1</sup> United States Constitution

its values, institutions and territory intact. And, we must provide for the well being and prosperity of the nation and its people.<sup>2</sup>

The two overarching NSS goals Clinton advocated to, support those national interests were enhancing security and bolstering American prosperity.. While one could argue that 'a stable world is a subset of security, given recent world events it should be elevated. The resultant triumvirate: security, world stability, and economic prosperity should guide our policy and therefore be the goals of a properly defined NSS.

### Misguided Goals and Objectives

The principal flaw of the Bush 43 NSS is, the misalignment between national interests and NSS goals. The document's overview of America's international strategy defines our goals as: political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity. While those are certainly noble endeavors, they are not directly aligned with our national interests. Security and world stability are addressed but economic freedom doesn't automatically translate into promoting economic prosperity. The placement of human dignity as one of the goals is also a serious mistake and conveys the wrong message to the rest of the world.

As the leader of the free world we must champion human dignity, but it should not be one of our primary NSS goals.' A respect for human dignity is a wonderful byproduct of a civilized prosperous society. However unfortunate, it is not a universal belief of societies' who have not achieved that level of enlightenment, and the sad truth is no amount of American arm-twisting is going to change that cruel fact. Strong armed tactics, which link trade and other assistance to human rights, are misguided and counterproductive. History clearly shows the path to human

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<sup>2</sup> William Clinton, National Security Strategy of the United States, May 1997, section I.

<sup>3</sup> While the preface also listed promoting democracy abroad as a main objective, it was subsumed under economic prosperity in the main document - as it should be see later discussion.

<sup>4</sup> George Bush, National Security Strategy of the United States, Sep 2002, 1.

rights is via the development of a strong educated middle class. Therefore a prudent human rights strategy addresses the root cause - poor economic conditions - while doing what we can to minimize the suffering along the way. A sustained effort to increase global growth through free markets and free trade coupled with humanitarian and educational assistance is the only viable long-term solution to this serious issue. Properly categorizing human rights as an objective under the goal of economic prosperity also prevents us from looking like hypocrites when realpolitik forces us to accept violations that, if confronted forcefully, derail more vital national interests.

The NSS objective of pushing America's unique brand of democracy onto the rest of the world is arrogant and counterproductive. While it is true that the American experiment has produced great wealth since the end of World War II, it is the height of arrogance to state there is "a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise".<sup>5</sup> Fifty years is not enough time to make such sweeping conclusions especially when we are not the only model for success. Soft authoritarianism with select democratic features (Singapore for example) has also produced great prosperity and respect for free trade. In many parts of the world explicitly linking our brand of democracy to economic progress only serves to derail progress toward our primary international objective of free markets and free trade. Not everyone believes a diverse secular culture with time stressed two career families and MTV is an improvement, or desired requirement for success. If democracy truly is, a necessary and sufficient condition for economic prosperity, then it will happen naturally as a consequence of mankind's primal desire to better themselves. We must advocate self-determination, not American democracy, and provide the information and education for underdeveloped and former communist countries to make the right choice.

The 2002 NSS overemphasizes attacking the symptoms of terrorism at the expense of a cogent policy for removing the root cause. A strong self defense and adapting our tactics to the changing threat supports our national interests. Making our age-old ability to conduct pre-emptive strikes explicit is a 'sound strategy against the current threats. Our enemies need to believe we will come after them even if multi-lateral coalition efforts fail. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) must be contained. DoD must be transformed to gain a competitive advantage over transnational terrorists.' However, the real long-term solution for a more secure and stable world is not more military action. The solution is a more vibrant world, economy and herein lays the NSS greatest weakness.

The primary goal, focus, and objectives of the NSS must be on global economic prosperity. The Bush document doesn't do that. Instead of being Wilsonian we must embrace the realism that our security and world stability are enabled by economic growth. Global poverty is the real enemy. Terrorism doesn't thrive where there is real hope of a better tomorrow. An emerging middle class is the nexus to freedom and human rights. Properly regulated market forces are the emerging world's police force. The NSS needs to properly address the policies and institutional reforms necessary to lead the world economy into a prosperous 21 century.

#### Missing Economic Emphasis.

Our ultimate strategic goal should be full spectrum economic dominance. To ensure our economic prosperity we must secure our leadership position in the critical aspects of the global economy - finance, advanced manufacturing, information technology, management of complex systems, etc. In conjunction, we must continue to foster the growth of free markets and free

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<sup>5</sup> George Bush, Introduction letter to the National Security Strategy. 1.

trade around the globe. While not properly linked to a policy of economic dominance, most of the foundation for these policies is embedded in Sections VI and VII of the NSS.

Section VI of the NSS outlines a comprehensive strategy for promoting free trade. However that section needs important clarifications on technology diffusion and environmental regulation.

While the environment is a transnational issue demands a long-term commitment, we also need to acknowledge forcing developing nations to immediately jump to our standards is counterproductive. To develop an economy you may need to harm the environment. The trick is prioritizing and then mitigating the aspects, of development that produce lasting damage. Our environmental policy must mandate those engineering trades and share our expertise in crafting pragmatic affordable solutions. Section VI must be rewritten to make that linkage between the environment and economic assistance.

Section VI also needs to be modified to,,protect our competitive advantage. Our national interests are not served by an unfiltered diffusion of technologies and ideas. Technologies and ideas are the lifeblood of the knowledge driven economy and key to wealth generation. We need to pay particular attention to the advanced manufacturing sector. Maintaining a vibrant advanced manufacturing has been linked to higher average wage growth<sup>6</sup> and provides the foundation for both economic and military dominance.

The objective of doubling the size of the world's poorest economies within a decade is clearly in our national interests. Removing the linkages to human rights and democracy in Section VII leaves a solid set of strategies toward that goal. As discussed earlier, democracy is not a prerequisite for economic growth and human rights is a byproduct of that growth. What developing and former communist countries need, first and foremost, are the infrastructure

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<sup>6</sup> Rolf Clark, "Economics and the Information Age," In Economics Notes: Readings in the Economics of National Security Strategy and Resource Allocation. (Washington DC: National Defense University, 2002), 66.

investments to, develop the rule of law and a formal property system. Put those accountable, flexible domestic institutions in place and foreign capital and GDP growth will follow enabling, the creation of a strong middle class.

The NSS fails to adequately address current economic threats. A disruption in the flow of Mideast oil - either by national or terrorist actions. - will have a devastating impact on the global economy and therefore our prosperity. An artificial oil shortage is an economic' WMD and we must pursue solutions just as vigorously as for military WMD threats. We must invest in alternative sources of energy and aggressively work with the Russians to exploit their known reserves. A Russian pipeline to the Pacific would change the whole strategic equation. In parallel we need to stabilize the current Mideast supply by removing the Palestinian issue. Simply saying the Arabs and Israelis should just work it out themselves is not sufficient. We must broker a fair and equitable path to lasting peace. Equally important we need to prepare for a future where a wide spectrum of economic "bombs" is the enemy's weapons of choice.

Future asymmetric threats will not be limited to the military sphere. The absence of a traditional war does not necessarily mean an economic peace. The rest of the world knows they can not compete with our military power and our moral code will not allow us to respond with military force to a low level economic attack. Given the dependence of global capital flows on the information grid a cyber attack is not hard to image yet difficult to detect and trace. How will we know when a run on a foreign currency is a legitimate market reaction or a well-

d conceived attack? Experience has shown you don't need to attack the big western economies directly to have a significant negative impact. A responsible administration has to assume this class of threat, and, other asymmetric economic weapons, is real and develop strategies for containment. Broadcasting those policies via the NSS will deter potential enemies.

No discussion on strategies to protect and enhance our economic prosperity is complete without addressing China. Here again the Bush team missed the mark. We need to stop viewing' China as the next Soviet Union. If the strongest economy in the world feels it must spend 3% of its GDP on defense, why shouldn't the third largest have the same right? In,a world where military might is still the ultimate guarantor of security, why should we be surprised at, or more to the point try to stop, China's transformation into a regional, power? Many years will pass before China could reach military peer status. We need to seize that opportunity to , fully integrate her into the world economy so that someday the thought of going to war with China is as remote as Japan or Germany. Heavy-handed tactics to "keep China in her place" only work against us. Chinese military expansion is already being sacrificed at the altar of economic development. We need to stop aggressively pushing our solution and let the invisible hand of Adam Smith work it's magic.

## CONCLUSION

The 2002 edition of the National Security Strategy is a flawed document. The goals and objectives are not properly aligned with our enduring national interests. The short-term nature of the current terrorism threat and the excessive emphasis on military superiority overshadows the more critical need for a long-term policy sharply focused on obtaining and maintaining economic dominance. Human dignity is mistakenly advanced as a primary objective instead of a byproduct of a sustained policy of world wide economic growth. American democracy is advanced instead of the universal right to self-determination. Current and future economic threats are ignored and our policy with respect to China is misguided. The document needs to be rewritten in order to provide a valid guide to American policy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> ce

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