



Examining the September 2002 National Security Strategy

In the National Security Strategy (NSS) released on 20 September 2002, President George W. Bush outlines a “distinctly American internationalism” to further U.S. interests through decisive security actions, cooperative stability and economic progress.

The document stresses the interdependence of a firm security posture, sound international relationships, economic and political stability, strong trade and good governance to establish and sustain global peace and prosperity. It also reiterates several policy statements made in the last year, including the President’s call for preemptive use of force against emerging threats.

“Today the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs is diminishing,” the document states.

Tumultuous events unfolding in the world may appear initially to be of little significance for the United States. However, unanticipated consequences and secondary effects can cause a backlash, disrupting domestic tranquility. One need not recount the prevalence and severity of terrorist plots, proliferating weapons of mass destruction (WMD), regional conflicts, genocide, AIDS and collapsed governments in the decade since the fall of the Iron Curtain to realize the potential dangers to the United States. To promote American values and promulgate national interests, the National Security Strategy acknowledges the need for the United States to wield its strength and influence in the world to shape it for the better.

Interdependent Policies

The Bush National Security Strategy rests on eight imperatives:

- promoting human rights;
- fostering alliances against terrorism;
- stemming regional conflicts;
- quashing rogue state threats and WMD proliferation;
- opening and sustaining free markets;
- developing sound, stable governments;
- promoting a favorable balance of power through coalitions;
- transforming U.S. national security institutions.

These strategies weave together solutions for terrorism, cooperative security and trade arrangements, governance, human dignity and economic development. Just as the lines have blurred between domestic and foreign issues, so too have the elements of social, economic, diplomatic and defensive concerns.

President Bush’s NSS reinforces policy statements he made in the last year, particularly in the June 2002 speech at West Point where he outlined the need for preemptive use of military force (see AUSA Defense Report 02-2, “A First Look at President Bush’s June 2002 West Point Speech,” June 2002). The NSS affirms the present course President Bush has taken in the war



on terror, cooperative security agreements and free market and free trade agreements. As is requisite for a sound security strategy, the document illustrates concrete concerns for potential threats to U.S. interests, particularly in relations with Russia and China. Similarly, it directs the military, the Department of Defense (DoD) and intelligence agencies to sustain the strategic advantage over any potential adversaries while advancing transformation. This blueprint will guide the National Military Strategy in coming months.

Domestic and International Security

A fundamental theme of the NSS is domestic and international security in light of terrorism, rogue states and WMD proliferation. To maintain global peace and stability, the strategy focuses on disruption of terrorism, preemption of WMD attack and homeland defense preparations as priorities. Denying terrorists sanctuary, fostering missile defense and reorganizing for homeland security were addressed in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The NSS elaborates on these issues with a repeated call for preemptive action against enemy threats. It endorses a continued reliance on efforts with friendly nations to undermine international financing of and illicit trade in WMD while securing the allies' confidence in mutual defense. A third element in the security thread is domestic preparedness for potential attacks and efficient consequence management.

Additionally, the NSS formulates a new deterrence policy, reinforcing the President's policy statements at West Point in June. Because terrorists and rogue states cannot defeat the United States militarily, they seek to inflict maximum destruction on it. Unlike traditional Cold War deterrence, achieving mutual standoff is inadequate. The United States must use, or at least pose the credible threat of, preemption to halt adversaries.

Military transformation, another QDR principle, received expanded attention in the NSS. It called on the military for continued strategic dominance in dissuading future competition, deterring threats, decisively defeating any foe and assuring allies. Forward deployments should remain a priority as the military shifts its focus from Cold War preparations to information-based, rapidly deployable joint warfighting. For DoD and U.S. intelligence agencies, transformation means streamlining internal operations and greater cooperative efforts. The necessity for shared information between intelligence agencies, law enforcement and allied countries must be addressed. Similarly, the State Department was called

upon to transcend its traditional diplomatic duties and reach out to foreign states in a range of fields to foster better relations worldwide.

The emphasis on coalitions, cooperative security arrangements and broader civil and economic development globally illustrates the interdependent approach of the NSS. While Russia and China received criticism for uneasy relations or unsettling policies, optimism for cooperative security plans coupled with economic development reinforced a holistic approach to international stability and peace.

Alliances and Cooperative Arrangements

The strategy's emphasis on allied efforts applies to security issues as well as economic trade and development. From the war on terror to regional conflicts such as the Israeli–Palestinian crisis and the India–Pakistan hostilities, the NSS reiterates the demand for the United States to lean on friendly nations to perpetuate a favorable balance of power. Coalitions have proven effective over the last decade for United Nations actions in the Persian Gulf, peacekeeping missions in the Balkans and current operations in Afghanistan. By fostering favorable relationships with local countries, the United States will best expand its influence to sustain peace and prosperity and prevent the spilling over that accompanies powder-keg regional conflicts between nuclear-equipped states.

In sustaining and improving relations with China and Russia, the United States maintains its potential for eased security concerns and expanded markets. While enlarging NATO to include several former communist states, the United States eased Russian concerns with a separate security arrangement. Similarly, U.S. concerns over Chinese human rights policies and tensions in Taiwan have not precluded expanded trade.

Organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Group of Seven (G-7) and World Trade Organization (WTO) extend free market economies and propagate positive changes for member nations. As a result, the prospects improve for a sturdy government rooted in rule of law, civil liberties and human rights. With the cooperation of not only strategic partners but also economically aligned nations, the United States stands in a better position to peaceably shape the world with its core values of democracy, good governance and human dignity. Free trade and free markets are fundamental contributors to American interests, global security and cooperative alliances.

Economic Development

Market economies benefit governments with improved stability, transparency and wealth. Free trade filters down to the individual level, helping those struggling to meet basic human needs. Improved living standards, education, property ownership and health care accompany material wealth and productivity. Generally, a highly functioning economy is mutually dependent on robust government, transparent justice and fundamental human rights. For the majority of the world, these are alien concepts.

The NSS outlines the relationship among sound economies, stable governments and a liberated, democratic populace. With trade comes development. Subsequently, a developing nation becomes aligned with larger free trade nations, receiving aid and importing sustainable products and principles for continued advancement. Nations torn apart by war, corruption and tyranny become festering wombs for future combatants. Countries like Afghanistan, Rwanda and Bosnia have demonstrated the dangers the United States may face if squalor and conflict are allowed to go unchecked. Reconstruction and sound aid policies not only will foster the global economy and ensure sustained peace but also

will provide the fundamental tools for individuals to build American-model democracies in their homelands.

Implications of the National Security Strategy

The implications of the NSS for military affairs point toward continued emphasis on proactive global involvement, rapid reaction and transformation. The document carries over several themes from the 1997 “Shape, Respond, Prepare” strategy. The military will continue to shape the strategic environment. The inclusion of the preemptive-strike option, however, demands the military heartily embrace a more proactive role. Sustaining effective force readiness will be crucial to making the President’s new deterrence a credible policy tool.

Crisis response and force modernization remain fundamental to the NSS. The current NSS borrows many principles from the 2001 QDR. The resulting National Military Strategy will most likely modify rather than rewrite existing strategy. The enacted changes will be more specific and focused to address the immediate and potent threats now confronting the United States. One should expect to see increased cooperation among federal and international agencies, within DoD and at state and local levels.

Key Points

- The September 2002 National Security Strategy emphasizes the decisive and influential role of the United States in the world today. It rests on eight imperatives, from promoting human rights to transforming U.S. national security institutions.
- Many elements of the NSS evolved from previous policy statements. The most apparent and major reiteration is the President’s call for a preemptive-strike policy to avert and defeat threats to the United States and its allies. The security focus emphasizes cooperation with friendly nations, bolstered coalitions and long-term economic and civil development.
- The NSS ties together the principles of free trade and developing markets with regional alliances and sustained global stability. Cooperation on all levels, whether in regional security, international commerce or pursuit of human rights, ensures the United States will maintain its strategic and economic dominance while peacefully perpetuating its democratic principles throughout the world.
- The NSS will guide the National Military Strategy, which directly impacts the course of the armed forces in the coming years. The United States will maintain its core capabilities and continue investing in a transformed force for the future. The preemptive-strike policy will push the military to heightened readiness and will demand greater resources to be a credible policy tool for the United States.