



Integrating Security

Preparing for the National Security Threats of the 21st Century

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Center for American Progress



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Read the full report at http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/11/integrating_security.html

Introduction and summary

President Barack Obama and his administration face a national security landscape that is greatly different from the one the United States confronted at the end of the previous century. Fragile states, weak governments, extremist non-state actors, hostile nuclear armed regimes, dynamic rising powers, and economic and environmental threats are but some of the most serious challenges facing the new administration. The complex and interconnected nature of these threats means that pursuing U.S. national security objectives will require a strong investment in diplomatic development, homeland security, and intelligence skills to complement our military strength.

The Obama administration understands the need to integrate and coordinate all instruments of American foreign policy to confront these threats. What's more, the administration has begun to lay the groundwork for this unified effort through strategic planning in three key executive agencies. The first of these efforts is Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's initiative to create a strategic planning guidance for the State Department, the so called Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, or QDDR. The second is the formulation of the administration's 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, or QDR, a document that defines our military's force structure and thus shapes its upcoming budget plans. Finally, the Department of Homeland Security is undertaking a similar quadrennial review, the QHSR, to determine how the agency can best execute its responsibilities.

Yet these studies depend on a larger strategic vehicle, the National Security Strategy, or NSS, a document meant to establish a comprehensive foundation for overall U.S. national security policy and provide guidance for specific tactical documents. As retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, the former head of U.S. Central Command, notes, this National Security Strategy document will be "the follow-up to the initial speeches and communication and it will be the authority for our own government structure, all the way down because from the strategy cascades the actions and the organization and the allocation of resources to make that [strategy] happen."¹

Congress mandates that every administration issue a yearly NSS, with the first report released within five months of taking office.² The Obama administration has clearly missed that deadline. As a result, these tactical planning documents will be coming together over the next several months without a unified strategy to inform them. It would be a grave mistake for the administration to delay too long in issuing this important guidance.

To be sure, Obama and his administration have already articulated some of the key principles of a new National Security Strategy. The president's speech before the United Nations last September and his speech in Cairo last June are two examples. So, too, are Vice President Joseph Biden's speech at the Munich Security Conference last February and the President's inaugural address, in which he declared that "our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint."³

The common themes of these addresses are broader engagement with friends and foes alike, a refusal to sacrifice our nation's values in the name of our security, and a return to American leadership of our vital alliances and international institutions. These themes make clear the Obama administration has no tolerance for its predecessor's preference for unilateralism and near sole reliance on the military as the primary instrument of national power.

But the array of challenges facing the administration is daunting. Success will depend not only on how well the administration is able to ensure that its policies live up to these stated values, but critically, on how ably the administration can draw on the U.S. government's full capabilities and tear down the bureaucratic boundaries between actors as diverse as the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Departments of Defense, Treasury, Energy, Homeland Security, and Agriculture. A timely, integrated national security strategy is necessary to drive this integration forward.

This document is a blueprint for the form such an NSS should take. The report draws on a large body of recent studies produced by the Center for American Progress as well as original research to layout a progressive agenda for keeping our nation safe and secure. We begin by defining U.S. national security objectives as the need to:

- Protect the people, allies and interests of the United States.
- Uphold and strengthen the norms of a stable international system.

The report then delineates the most serious threats facing the United States today. These challenges include:

- Violent extremists with global reach that aim to harm the United States and other liberal democracies.
- An ever-growing group of weak and failing states that can provide safe harbor for terrorists and destabilize regions.
- Hostile regimes that actively seek weapons of mass destruction.
- Rising powers that are becoming more powerful and assertive in international affairs.
- A growing reliance on foreign fossil fuels that makes our country energy dependent and leads to climate change and environmental degradation.
- A range of economic threats, including underdevelopment and cybercrime.

Success will depend on how ably the administration can draw on the U.S. government's full capabilities.

President George W. Bush confronted many of these same threats during his time in office, but his strategy and tactics were decidedly different. In the introduction to his 2006 National Security Strategy, Bush proclaimed that the United States intended to “shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy.”⁴ It was a bold statement that encapsulated the best and worst of American exceptionalism—a sense of duty to improve the world’s condition pitted against an obdurate preference for unilateral action and an exaggerated sense of the capability of U.S. military power to achieve its objectives at a minimal cost.

This approach was used to justify the overmilitarization of U.S. foreign policy, including the unnecessary invasion and occupation of Iraq. It led the Bush administration to relegate the mission in Afghanistan and other vital national security concerns to second-tier status, and allow U.S. diplomatic and development capabilities to atrophy beyond their post-Cold War nadir.

President Barack Obama inherited the wreckage of these failures and has begun to take a fundamentally different approach to the conflicts the Bush administration could not resolve, but more needs to be done in four specific areas:

- The Obama administration is taking too long to issue its first national security strategy. It has failed to meet its legal obligation to produce an NSS within five months of taking office, and it has allowed planning documents such as the QDR, QDDR, and QHSR to move forward without unified strategic guidance.
- The debate over whether to empower State, USAID, and other agencies to take a larger role in U.S. national security is over. But the administration still needs a plan and a budget to strengthen these actors. Strong guidance from the executive branch in the form of a unified national security budget is necessary for the president and Congress to rebalance U.S. defense, development, diplomacy, homeland security, and intelligence capabilities.
- Obama’s challenge is to unify the instruments of national power, as well as undo the damage that the previous administration did to U.S. foreign policy. President Obama faces many of the same threats that George W. Bush confronted—violent extremists, weak and failing states, and hostile regimes. Yet many of Bush’s policies failed to significantly advance U.S. interests, which made already difficult issues more challenging. Iran is the most obvious example of this trend.
- Dealing with the rapidly changing threat environment must be a key part of the administration’s national security strategy. Nontraditional enemies, such as stateless terrorist groups, are challenging our traditional ideas of how to achieve national security, but a new set of challenges is already growing. These include cybercrime, climate change-induced migration and instability, and changes in the international system due to rising and resurgent powers.

Policy recommendations

The United States must integrate all the elements of American military and foreign policy to protect our vital interests, but reject those policies that create more enemies than they eliminate, or undermine international security. By doing so, we can keep our country safe and restore America's role as a nation whose morality and strength make the world better for all people. Specifically, the United States must continue to reverse the foreign policy legacy of the Bush administration and move forward with new strategies by:

- Fundamentally changing the U.S. response to the threat posed by radical extremists with global reach who aim to harm the United States, its people, allies, and interests.
- Significantly increasing U.S. funding for development programs in weak and failing states.
- Using all diplomatic tools to engage with, rather than isolate hostile regimes.
- Promoting the integration of rising powers into the existing international architecture.
- Reducing America's energy dependence by investing in renewable energy sources and smart grid technology.
- Moving forward with the Obama administration's cybersecurity agenda and building institutions to undermine global poverty.

Implementation strategies

Create a unified national security budget

The United States has the capability to confront these threats to global security and stability, but in order to do so most efficiently and effectively we must also address the imbalance between key elements of our national power. A unified national security budget that enables policymakers to more readily make the trade-offs necessary between defense, economic development, and diplomacy is the best vehicle to prepare the U.S. government to confront the threats of the 21st century.

Agency specific guidance

Beyond budgetary considerations, we must also reorganize and reprioritize our diplomatic development, homeland security, and intelligence capabilities, which have not kept pace with our ever-expanding military power. Our central recommendations include:

- Increasing the effectiveness of the State Department by fully staffing overseas Foreign Service Officer positions.
- Revamping the antiquated Foreign Aid Assistance Act in order to provide coherent guidance to the executive branch and to ensure consistency across government agencies.
- Increasing the effectiveness of U.S. development assistance by appointing a new Director for International Development on empowering and strengthening the administrator of USAID to guide all U.S. development programs.
- Resetting and modernizing our overburdened military while ensuring that the Defense Department has the tools and training to counter the most likely threats facing the United States in the 21st century.
- Providing the resources and time to allow the first Quadrennial Homeland Security Review to address the many shortcomings of that relatively new agency.
- Continue to expand transparency and cooperation in the intelligence community.

The United States will be more secure and more successful in international affairs when its critical agencies have the resources to carry out their individual mandates effectively and the political will to coordinate their work and goals.

Why now?

The Center for American Progress over the past five years demonstrated again and again why the threats we detail in this report require the actions we recommend. In 2005, the Center released “Integrated Power: A National Security Strategy for the 21st Century.” At the core of this document was the recognition that the United States was more secure when it integrated all the elements of U.S. national power, rather than using them in isolation from each other.

Building on the foundation of “Integrated Power,” in 2008 the Center launched its “Sustainable Security” project. Sustainable security asserts that American leadership in the 21st century will require a shift from our outdated notion of national security to a more realistic concept of “sustainable security”—that is our security as defined by the contours of a world gone global and shaped by our common humanity. Sustainable Security requires:

- **National security**, or the safety of the United States.
- **Human security**, or the well-being and safety of people.
- **Collective security**, or the shared interests of the entire world.

Now, “Integrating Security” offers a set of policy recommendations to move forward with the ideas outlined in those reports, including the creation of a unified national security budget, and lays out a blueprint for achieving these objectives. These steps together will put the United States on the right path to reverse the failed foreign policies of the Bush administration and meet the national security challenges of the 21st century.

The United States is more secure when it integrates all the elements of U.S. national power.

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The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

