

The Bush National Security Strategy For The United States Of America: Challenges For The Obama Administration

Rev. Odoh, S. I. Ph.D.¹

Department of Political Science
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki,

Chilaka, Francis C.²

Department of Political Science
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Email: karaiie@yahoo.com

Abstract

The Bush National Security Strategy -was an ambitious defence and foreign policy strategy that upended the fundamental basis of US foreign policy held for over 50 years by deterrence and containment. As a sharp departure from the conventional US foreign policy, couched in undiluted realism and expressed with preemptive actions it leaves on its trail enormous defence and foreign policy Challenges. This study unraveled the core factors that shaped the Bush National Security Strategy for the US and the defense and foreign policy challenges they pose to the Obama Administration.

Introduction

What factors formed the basis of George Bush (Jnr) National Security Strategy? What challenges does his National security strategy pose to the Obama Administration? These questions are fundamental as a result of four important developments. First, the Bush administration removed two key pillars that held US foreign policy for more than 50 years: the doctrine of deterrence, which sought to prevent a nuclear attack by threatening massive retaliation and the policy of containment, which held that US military forces needed only to be strong enough to contain any aggressor and replaced it with the policy of preemptive attack. Second, and perhaps most fundamental, the Bush Administration employed brutal unilateralism that flies in the face of American foreign policy. As Dworkin (cited in Moon and Yun 2003:22-23) observed, the Bush Administration has taken several unilateral measures that defy the traditional US stance: casting a veto on the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, taking the lead in the Senate's refusal to ratify the establishment of the international Criminal Court, unilateral nullification of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, opposition to UN regulation on illicit transactions of small weapons, and indefinite delay of senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test ban Treaty (CTBT). More importantly, initiation of war on Iraq without a resolution of the UN Security Council can be seen as the epitome of American unilateralism under Bush. The unilateral attitude also manifested in her alliance system. As Rumsfeld has suggested, "The mission must determine the coalition; the coalition must not determine the mission. If it does, the mission will be dumped down to the lowest common denominator and we can't (sic) afford that" (cited in Moon and Van, 2003:23).

Third, "democratic" regimes were forcefully established in Afghanistan and Iraq by the administration underlining the idea of exporting democracy by America. The administration believed that democracy is a solution to all the problems of the world including terrorism. Therefore, the US apparently has a responsibility to promote democratic government and free enterprise in the world particularly where it is lacking and has a right to impose democracy on the other nations and cultures regardless of their circumstances and preferences (Simes, 2003:98).

Fourth, the Arab world is increasingly hostile to the US. At least, judging by media coverage, the most prominent security threat to US is the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Islamic insurgents this has occasioned. America is facing threats to its national security which seem strange and unprecedented. The vicious and versatile insurgence in Iraq, the widespread and deadly transnational network of Islamist terrorists, the steady and relentless efforts by Iran to develop nuclear weapons-its own "Islamism bomb"- and the prospects that Islamist terrorists might themselves acquire nuclear weapons all combine to show the situation America is.

Despite these developments, intellectuals have devoted little or no attention to critical examination of the national Security Strategy of the Bush Administration and its Challenges to the Obama Administration that succeeded it. This study has been designed to fill this vacuum. The central questions that will form the foundation of this inquiry are; first, what factors formed the basis of Bush National Security strategy? Second, does it pose challenges to the Obama Administration? If yes, what are the challenges? Before we critically analyze these issue, let us examine the concept of national security.

History and Meaning of National Security

The relatively new concept of national security was first introduced in the United States after World War II. and has to some degree replaced other concepts that describe the struggle of states to overcome various external and internal threats. The concept of national security became an official guiding principle of foreign policy in the United States when the National Security Act of 1947 was signed on July 26, 1947 by President Harry S. Truman. The majority of the provisions of the Act took effect on 18 September 1947, the day after the Senate confirmed James V. Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense. Together with its 1949 amendment, this act:

created the National Military Establishment (NME) which became known as the Department of Defense when the act was amended in 1949, created a separate Department of the Air Force from the existing United States Army Air Forces, subordinated the military branches to the new cabinet level position of the Secretary of Defense, and established the National Security Council, a central place of coordination for national security policy in the Executive Branch, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States' first peacetime intelligence agency ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk: National_security](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:National_security))

The above shows that security is conceived in terms of national security whereas the term "security" is somewhat vague unless it is discussed in some context. There is a tendency in peace and security studies to conceptualize security as the protection against espionage or the guarantee of public safety. Thus, we often hear of a country being secured when it is not at war and public lives and properties not threatened. There is a consensus among scholars that security implies freedom from threats to core values (for both individuals and groups) but there is a major disagreement about whether the main focus of enquiry should be on "individual", "national", or "international" security (Baylis and Smith, 2006:300).

Most writings on the subject are dominated by the idea of national security, which was largely defined in military terms as a result of the Cold War period. Scholars and statesmen tend to view it as the military capabilities that states should develop to deal with the threats that faced them. Based on the primacy of the state, national security has been conceived as the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation-state through the use of economic, military and political power and the exercise of diplomacy (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:national_security) In the same vein, Knight (2002:2) is of the view that national security strategy is a place to spell out national interests, threats to those interests, and the organization and allocation of national resources to pursue and defend those interests. In realist international relations theory, nation states are seen as "amoral" units which are expected to pursue their national interests internationally, Kegley (2007:445) contends that national security is a country's capacity to resist external or internal threats to its physical survival or core values. The realist thread can be said to run through all these conceptions of national security.

However, this idea of security has come under severe attacks as a result of its narrow definition. Instead, a number of contemporary scholars have argued for an expanded conception of security outward from the limits of parochial national security to include a range of other considerations. Buzan in his study, *People, States and Fear*, argues that security should include political, economic, social, environmental, as well as military which he also defined in broader international terms. This

involves states overcoming “excessively self-referenced security policies” and thinking instead about security interest of their neighbours (Buzan, 1983:214).

It should be noted that the stress between national and international security is not accepted by all writers on security. They argue that focus on state and inter-state relations divorces the fundamental changes which take place in the world. They contend that much attention should be given to “security” as a result of the process of globalization. They accept that this process brings new risk and dangers. These include the risk associated with such things as international terrorism, a breakdown of global monetary system, global warming, and the dangers of nuclear accidents. These threats to security, on a planetary level, are viewed as being largely outside the control of nation-states. Only with the development of the global community, they believe, can deal with this adequately.

President Bush National Security Strategy for the US

When George Bush was elected the American president in 2000, he gave every indication that he, like his father before him, was a conventional “realist” in foreign affairs, committed to the grand strategy of employing military force in instances involving “national

interest”. The September 11, 2001 terrorists’ attacks on the US reinforced the administration’s belief that international relations is all about power politics and embraced a foreign and defence strategy that seemed to be nothing short of “revolutionary realism”. As aptly captured by McBrien (2004:1) the attacks of September 11, 2001 caused a tectonic shift in the national security strategy thinking in the United States. In a relatively brief moment what had once been unthinkable became a very distinct possibility. This new reality was acknowledged at the 2002 graduation speech at the United States Military Academy at West Point when President Bush noted that:

The gravest danger to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our enemies have declared this very intention, and have been caught seeking these terrible weapons. They want the capability to blackmail us,

or to harm us, or to harm our friends and we will oppose

them with all our power.

Subsequent to the President's West Point speech the White House published *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, which has come to be known as the "Bush Doctrine." It essentially reiterates, in four pages, presidential statements made over the months following 9/11, including the President's speeches before a Joint Session of Congress on 20 September 2001, before the Warsaw Conference on Combating Terrorism on 6 November, his State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002, his remarks before the student body of the Virginia Military Institute on 17 April, and his address to the graduating class at the US Military Academy at West Point on June, 2002.

The Bush National Security Strategy (NSS) consists of four basic elements. First, the United States would no longer rely solely on Cold War doctrines of containment and deterrence, but would instead pursue a strategy of preemptive intervention in order to take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats, before they emerge. That is the Bush NSS advocates the preemptive use of military force against terrorists or state sponsors of terrorism that attempt to gain or use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (Lieber and Lieber, 2002:33). These are the most serious threats facing the US and according to the document",, as a matter of common sense and self-defence, America will act against such threats before they are fully formed" (White House, 2002).

Second, the United States would concentrate on exporting democracy, since the requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa, Latin America, and the entire Islamic world (Cui, 2005:405). The Bush NSS commits the United States to spread democracy worldwide and promote the development of "free and open societies on every continent". The US, the document declares, "Must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere", and a judgment that promoting these principles abroad not only benefits citizens of other countries, but will also increase US national security by making foreign conflicts less likely.

Third, the NSS declares that, "We are guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliance and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations. The US is committed to lasting institutions..." The document goes on to say, "While the US will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone..." (White House, 2002). The administration appears to reject the single-minded pursuit of multilateralism for its own sake; that is, as something inherently necessary for international legitimacy or morality. Instead, the Bush NSS holds that a basic willingness to "go it alone" is consistent with, and might even facilitate productive multilateral cooperation.

Finally, the United States would maintain its military supremacy beyond challenge, thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace. The Bush NSS confidently acknowledged US unparalleled position of power in the world and unapologetically holds that a fundamental goal of US grand strategy should be to maintain US primacy by dissuading the rise of any challengers. The NSS declares, "...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." (White House, 2002).

The Bush NSS according to Kegley (2007:475) is the most sweeping reformulation US defence since the 1947 National Security Act. Thus it sparked controversy at US and abroad. Some critics see it as further testimony to American unilateralism and arrogance; as the triumph within the Bush Administration of a neo-conservative agenda aimed at ensuring a permanent American primacy in the world. Others regard it as a reckless setting of a dangerous precedent that other states will exploit to mask aggression. Still others see the doctrine as simply a construct to justify an attack on Iraq. Proponents of the Bush NSS contend that a threat revolution is under way which requires new approaches to using force. The 9/11 tragedy, they argue, was a warning of worse much worse things to come if the United States remains in the reactive posture it assumed during the Cold War. The stakes, they claim, are as high as they were during the Cold War, but are now dealing with enemies who do not care whether they live or die.

Security Implications of the Bush NSS

The eight-year reign of George W. Bush as president of US were rocked by various incidents notably the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US-led military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the missile defence systems in Alaska and California and the proposed missile defence system in Poland and Czech Republic.

The most daring of all the moves the bush Administration took was the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. Although public order started showing marked improvement in 2008, the security in Afghanistan crumbled as result of resurgence of Taliban forces and other disruptive developments, prompting the United States to begin shifting the focus of war on terrorism from Iraq to Afghanistan and Pakistan (NIDS., 2009:217). Today, more than five years since the war started in Iraq, the US maintained a strong military strength totaling 146,000 personnel, before the Obama Administration's troop withdrawal started in June 30, 2009. This military campaign has come at a great human and material prize. It is believed that the US has suffered about 4,185 fatalities since the war began in Iraq (NIDS, 2009:218).

According to a recent figure, Grilfis (2009) noted that US military casualty can be gleaned from the table below:

The Human Cost of Occupation

American Military Casualties in Iraq

DateTotalIn Combat

American Deaths

Since war began (3/19/03):	4325	3463
Since "Mission Accomplished" (5/1/03)	4186	3355

Since Capture of Saddam (12/13/03):	3864	3158
Since Handover (6/29/04):	4366	2830
Since Obama Inauguration (1/20/09):	97	29

American Wounded	Official	Estimated
Total Wounded:	31431	Over 100000

Latest Fatality July 13 2009

Source. [Http://www.antiwar.com/casualties/](http://www.antiwar.com/casualties/)

This figure excludes the number of US military casualties in Afghanistan where security situation has seriously worsened.

Tax payers' money has also been spent on wars that some analysts see to be unwinnable. As noted by Mayville (UD) the total money spent or allocated to both military and non-military spending by US in Iraq comes to about \$25 5 million per day, or a little less than \$1,8 billion a week (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15377059/>); and the current cost of war in Afghanistan as numerically captured by Whitehead (UD) is \$ 2 billion per month ([http:// www.huffingtonpost.com/john-w-whitehead/does-the-afghanistan-war_b187157.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-w-whitehead/does-the-afghanistan-war_b187157.html)).

This has prompted Stiglitz and Bilmes (2008) to fume as follows:

The cost of direct US military operations – not even including long-term costs such as taking care of wounded veterans – already exceeds the cost of the 12-year war in Vietnam and is more than double the cost of the Korean War. And, even in the best case scenario, these costs are projected to be almost ten times the cost of the first Gulf War, almost a third more than the cost of the Vietnam War, and twice that of the First World War. The only war in our history which cost more was the Second World War, when 16.3 million U.S. troops fought in a campaign lasting four years, at a total cost (in 2007 dollars, after adjusting for inflation) of about \$5 trillion (that's \$5 million million, or £2.5 million million). With virtually the entire armed forces committed to fighting the Germans and Japanese, the cost per troop (in today's dollars) was less than \$100,000 in 2007 dollars. By contrast, the Iraq war is costing upward of \$400,000 per troop.

The Bush NSS showed commitment to its central objectives when in September 2008, the Department of Energy and the Department of *Defence* issued *National Security and Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*, a report that openly reaffirmed the significance of US possession of nuclear weapons. One wonders how a power that openly flexes its nuclear arsenal will successfully deter other powers from acquiring such nuclear power in the emerging 21st century security environment.

Though, one may argue that open display of the US nuclear arsenal may be as a result of the apparently, perceived threats and ballistic missile development, including steady extension of missile range, by North Korea, Iran, and other nations hostile toward the US. To counter this threat, Washington promoted the creation of a multi-layered ballistic missile defence (BMD) system that could respond to each phase of ballistic missile-boost, midcourse, and terminal.

To this end, Washington indicated its intention to deploy an antimissile radar station in Czech Republic and 10 interceptor missiles in Poland by 2012. According to a Pentagon spokesman, the two countries were selected because they were technically optimum deployment location for defence against Iranian missiles launched at the US or Europe, and because of their distance from Iran-The US does not yet have an operable boost-phase defence system for close engagement, and deployment in locations further away from Iran would leave more countries vulnerable to Iranian missile attacks (NIDS, 2009:233).

Expectedly, this did not go down well with Russia. The Bush administration says the bases are designed to shoot down “rogue” missiles fired by Iran or North Korea, its proposed system would be helpless against Russia’s vast nuclear arsenal. But this claim has been greeted with widespread incredulity, not just in Russia but also among some of the US’s nervous NATO allies. They include Germany, where the Social Democrat leader, Kurt Beck, warned that the US and Russia were on the brink of another arms race “on European soil” (*The Guardian*, Wednesday 11 April 2007).

Former Russian President Putin, also suggested that Russia could respond to the threat by aiming its nuclear weapons at Europe. Asked whether the planned U.S. missile defence shield in Eastern Europe would compel Moscow to target its own missiles on U.S. military sites and other locations in Europe, Putin replied: “Naturally, yes. If the American nuclear potential grows in European territory, we have to give ourselves new targets in Europe,” he was quoted as saying. “It is up to our military to define these targets.” (<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/06/03/putin-waming.htm>) Thus, if Washington succeeds in her deployment of missile defence system in Eastern Europe, analysts are of the view that this will stoke arms race in the region; make states where it is stationed targets by *rogue* states; and reignite a Cold War between US and Russia. Since this idea of missile defence was mooted by the Bush Administration, Kremlin’s relations with Washington have worsened. Kremlin has sharpened its opposition to US deployment of BMD system in Europe, prompting the US to seek greater dialogue with Russia in order to assuage the latter’s concerns. For example, the Pentagon has indicated its willingness to increase the transparency of its BMD system, and to delay activation of the system until the emergence of a tangible Iranian missile threat.

With the policy of preemption part of the basis of Bush’s defence policy, it requires that the US military should be transformed and upgraded. Thus, the administration implemented a programme to transform and upgrade the massive arsenal it built up near the end of the Cold War and by modernizing its forces through aggressive adoption of information technology. However, the outlook for further modernisation efforts is not necessarily positive. It will be difficult to maintain the current high level of defence spending in coming years due to US economy’s decline and budget pressure from the impending rise in social security.

Bush National Security Strategy: Challenges for the Obama Administration

The Democratic Party candidate, Barack Obama, won the US president election on November 4, 2008. While the main task of the Obama Administration will be to rebuild the US economy which has decline steeply in the face of the global financial crisis, the administration will also be inheriting many task from the Bush Administration in the areas of National security and foreign policy.

While making Iraq and Afghanistan his primary security concerns as a wartime president, his administration is also expected to exercise diplomatic leadership across a broad spectrum of international challenges, including stabilizing of Pakistan, the nuclear programmes of Iran and North Korea and mending relations with Russia. The first task is restoring the international prestige of US which was seriously damaged under the Bush Administration and revising foreign policy toward that end. The Obama administration will have to extricate itself from the unilateralism that characterized the administration it succeeded and place much emphasis on multilateralism and cooperation with traditional allies while expanding and strengthening partnership with emerging nations. Through this, Obama can repair the damage done to the international prestige of US.

The administration will probably strengthen the US military which has grown wary as a result of war in order to boost its effectiveness. The issue of Iraq remains, and here the administration as promised has started withdrawing US troops while assessing the situation that unfolds in that country. Since he has designated Afghanistan as the main battlefield in the war against terrorism, he will work to stabilize that country and eradicating *al-Qaeda* by deploying additional troops, bolstering collaboration with NATO members, other allies, and partners, and by taking deeper interest in Pakistan to fight the war on terrorism. In an article he wrote for *Foreign Affairs* in 2007, Obama expressed his stance on the Global war on terrorism in the following words:

To defeat al Qaeda, I will build twenty-first-century military and twenty-first-century partnerships as the anticommunist alliance that won the Cold War to stay on the offense everywhere from Djibouti to Kandaha (Obama, cited in NIDS, 2009:246).

The problem of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and North Korea will also be paramount on Obama's radar. The administration will have to reexamine the hardcore stand of the Bush Administration to bring about a denuclearized North Korea and Iran. Some of the steps undertaken by the Bush Administration has pitched US against Russia. As a corollary to the above, the new administration will endeavour to rebuild relations with Russia which is likely to be an important challenge as the whole world would watch to see how the US improve relations that has mangled since the Russia/Georgian conflict in August 2008, without endangering its relations with her other Eastern Europe allies that Russia is breathing down their necks.

Finally, the US over the years has consistently endeavoured to promote and protect democracy throughout the world. At many times, this spread of democratic project has destabilized its relations with many countries. This is especially true of the Bush Administration's style of

foreign policy, which aimed to forcibly spread democratic values. While the spread of democratic values is indeed an important undertaking, it is to be hoped that Obama Administration will work extra mile to convince weak states on the need for good governance without endangering some profound values.

Conclusion

It is evident from the analysis so far that the Bush Administration has left an overdose of defence and foreign policy challenges for the Obama Administration. These challenges are most rooted in the ambitious foreign policy of the Bush Administration which is cabined in his *National Security Strategy for the United States*. This has made Obama a war president and it is left to be seen how Obama will tackle these barrage of security challenges facing him when combined with other pressing problems like revamping the US economy.

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