

National Security Strategy

A 52-page document, the National Security Strategy Report of 2010 (NSS 2010) puts forth a new U.S. strategy for national economic renewal, global leadership, and comprehensive engagement aimed at strengthening the capacity for collective action to create a just and sustainable international order that can resolve 21st-century challenges. The document is written in a manner aimed at articulating the rationale, goals, and constituent policies of each component of this ambitious, far reaching strategy, which is global in conception and focused both on the near and long terms. Its strategic approach endeavors to blend the art of the possible with that of fostering the desirable. While acknowledging that the United States must work within the confines of the often stressful world, with its numerous dangers and threats, the NSS 2010 aspires to employ U.S. energy and purpose, in concert with allies and other cooperative partners, in an effort to shape the future in ways that produce a more secure, stable, and prosperous world. Accordingly, the NSS 2010 calls for the United States to remain in a leadership role in global affairs, rather than retreat into disengagement and isolation. Furthermore, it calls upon the United States to harness a wide array of civilian and military instruments, to continue meeting its security commitments to allies, to work closely with many other nations and international institutions, and to deal firmly with adversary nations and other actors that threaten U.S. security interests and global peace. By any measure, this is a strategy anchored in both hopeful goals and commitment to an activist foreign policy and diplomacy, but often in ways that differ from those of the past.

More than earlier strategies, the NSS 2010 places considerable emphasis on renewing America's economic prosperity to create a strong foundation for an assertive national security strategy. Accordingly, it calls for national

policies aimed at reducing the deficit, ending recession, and restoring economic growth. It also calls for investments in education, clean energy, infrastructure, technological innovation, and goods and services for export. For similar reasons, it mandates close cooperation with the Group of 20 (G-20) in order to create sustained global economic growth in ways that benefit the U.S. economy. A stronger economy, the NSS 2010 contends, can liberate the resources needed to fund a whole-of-government approach to national security strategy. This approach envisions sustained efforts to strengthen policy implementation by integrating a wide spectrum of means, including diplomatic, informational, military, economic, intelligence, development, homeland security, and strategic communications instruments. Whereas earlier NSS studies often treated defense preparedness as the main instrument of power, the NSS 2010 views military forces as one instrument among many, all of which require appropriate funding as well as strong coordination by the U.S. Government. But it also makes clear that the United States must maintain its military superiority in the form of tailored deterrence strategies and fully sufficient capabilities across all domains—land, sea, air, and cyber—to reassure allies, contend with threats, and otherwise perform core defense missions.

The NSS 2010 defines *engagement* as the active participation by the United States in relationships beyond its borders, and it proposes to carry out engagement more vigorously and in different ways than found in the strategy of the George W. Bush administration (2001–2009). It asserts that comprehensive engagement must begin with close friends and allies, but must reach beyond them to other countries, including great powers and adversaries. While the NSS 2010 makes clear that the United States will retain the right to use military force when necessary, it disavows unilateralism and regular use of force as well as practices, such as torture, that can be viewed as violations of international law. It proclaims that promoting universal values—including democratic practices, respect for human rights, and setting a sound moral example—is highly important to enhancing U.S. influence abroad.

Compared to the Bush administration, it places less emphasis on rapid global democratization as a central engine of progress and is more prone to advance this goal through quiet diplomacy rather than high-profile activity. Its approach to global diplomacy emphasizes that multilateralism and collective action will be a dominant practice in handling both security affairs and the world economy. It calls upon the United States to preserve and reform existing alliances, broaden partnerships, pursue cooperation with such big powers as Russia, China, and India, and work closely with the United Nations and other international organizations. In its view, flourishing multilateral partnerships should be a principal mechanism—more so than in the recent past—for strengthening U.S. influence, mobilizing many nations to address problems from the perspective of common shared interests, and isolating countries and actors that threaten peace.

In deciding how the United States should act abroad, the NSS 2010 views the world as undergoing a major transition propelled by fast-paced changes, heading away from the international order inherited from the Cold War, and moving rapidly toward an unclear destination, which must be proactively shaped by the Nation and its allies. It portrays globalization as a main dynamic drawing previously distant regions and countries closer together in a growing web of economic, political, and information ties. The result, it asserts, is a combination of promising and perilous trends that, while yielding progress in many ways, is encouraging and empowering such dangerous trends as the persistent rise of terrorist groups and the grave threat of nuclear proliferation. In this setting, the NSS 2010 calls for U.S. national security strategy to pursue four enduring national interests:

- security: the security of the United States, its citizens, allies, and partners
- prosperity: a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity
- values: respect for universal values at home and abroad

- international order: an order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.

Handling Top Security Priorities. The NSS 2010 identifies the following top security priorities for U.S. strategy:

- strengthen security and resilience at home
- disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its violent extremist affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the world
- reverse the spread of nuclear and biological weapons and secure nuclear materials
- advance peace, security, and opportunity in the Greater Middle East
- invest in the capacity of strong and capable partners
- secure cyberspace.

To strengthen security and resilience at home, the NSS 2010 calls for such steps as preventing and interdicting threats, denying hostile actors the ability to operate within U.S. borders, doing a better job of reducing vulnerabilities to the national infrastructure as well borders, ports, and airfields, and enhancing overall air, maritime, transportation, and space security. It also calls for improved measures to manage emergencies, empower communities to counter radicalization, strengthen Federal-state-local cooperation, and work closely with allies and partners on common homeland security agendas.

To wage a global campaign against al Qaeda and its terrorist affiliates, the NSS 2010 earmarks the importance of homeland security measures, but it attaches special emphasis to defeating al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, it calls for an assertive strategy aimed at denying al Qaeda a safe haven, disallowing the Taliban the ability to overthrow the government, and strengthening the capacity of the Afghanistan government and security forces, so they can take lead responsibility for their future. Within Pakistan, it calls for continuing U.S. efforts to work with the government to address the

local, regional, and global threat from violent extremists. In order to attain these objectives in both countries, the NSS 2010 puts forth a three-pronged strategy aimed at:

- employing the U.S. military and International Security Assistance Force to target the insurgency, secure key population centers, and train Afghan security forces
- working with partners and the United Nations to improve Afghan governance and economic conditions
- fostering a relationship with Pakistan founded on mutual interests and mutual respect in ways aimed at both countering terrorists and promoting Pakistan's democratic and economic development.

While the NSS 2010 focuses mainly on Afghanistan and Pakistan, it also calls for growing pressure to deny al Qaeda safe-havens in such places as Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb, and the Sahel.

The NSS 2010 attaches high priority to reversing the spread of nuclear weapons and materials as well as biological weapons. It calls for intensified efforts to pursue the goal of a world without nuclear weapons through such steps as strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), ratifying the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia, ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and pursuing a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of nuclear materials intended for use in weapons. It views the basic bargain of the NPT as still valid: countries with nuclear weapons will move toward disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will forsake them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. The NSS 2010 also calls for presenting a clear choice to Iran and North Korea: either accept denuclearization or face isolation from the international community. In addition, it puts forth policies aimed at securing nuclear weapons and materials, supporting peaceful nuclear energy, and countering biological threats. In particular, it cites the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism as programs that should be expanded into durable international efforts.

Proclaiming that the United States has important interests in the Greater Middle East that include stable security affairs and political-economic progress, the NSS 2010 calls for an American engagement that is both comprehensive and strategic and that extends beyond near-term threats to include long-term development. In Iraq, it calls for a responsible transition to full Iraqi responsibility as U.S. forces withdraw by the end of 2011. As the war in Iraq ends, it promises strong U.S. civilian support for the country, led by the State Department, coupled with a regional diplomacy aimed at ensuring that Iraq emerges as stable, secure, and prosperous with a competent, democratic government.

The NSS 2010 also calls for vigorous efforts to promote Arab-Israeli peace rooted in a two-state solution for Palestine and Israel, as well as better Israeli relations with Syria and Lebanon. To promote a responsible Iran, the NSS 2010 calls for a U.S. policy of engagement in hope that Iran will switch course away from threatening behavior and toward constructive participation in regional and global affairs. But it also warns that if Iran fails to respond positively, it will face even greater isolation.

Through the lens of the NSS 2010, the practice of investing in the capacity of strong and durable partners refers to efforts aimed at helping failed and failing states to surmount their internal problems, achieve political-economic progress, and resist radicalization and extremism. This agenda has three components: fostering security and reconstruction in the aftermath of conflict, pursuing sustainable and responsible security systems in at-risk states, and preventing the emergence of conflict by promoting long-term development. The desired outcome is not only restored stable states but also close friends and partners of the United States. The NSS 2010 cites Iraq and Afghanistan as the top near-term priorities for this type of involvement, but its open-ended discussion suggests potential involvements elsewhere when failing states have strategic importance. The implication is that even if the United States ultimately withdraws from Iraq and Afghanistan, it will be in the business of stabilization, reconstruction, and comprehensive approaches for a long time.

The final security priority cited by the NSS 2010 is securing cyberspace. Stating that the national digital infrastructure is a vital strategic asset, the NSS 2010 identifies cyber threats from a wide spectrum of sources: individual hackers, criminal groups, terrorist networks, and advanced hostile nations. It demonstrates particular concern about major cyber attacks that could cause crippling damage to the U.S. Government, economy, and military forces. To protect U.S. information networks, the NSS 2010 calls for close cooperation among the government, industry, and private citizens. It also calls for similar cooperation with partner nations to prevent cyber attacks, deal effectively with them when they occur, and recover promptly.

Promoting Prosperity and Values. The NSS 2010 mainly views prosperity in terms of restoring sustained growth to the U.S. economy, but it calls for policies aimed at fostering growth by the international economy as well. It views pursuit of a healthy global economy and stable security affairs as interconnected and mutually reinforcing. It argues that the free flow of commerce advances peace among nations by making them more integrated, prosperous, and stable. Conversely, it argues that disastrous shocks to the world economy, slowdowns, and recessions can damage prosperity in many places and help make security affairs more intractable. The challenge facing the United States, it reasons, is not only to make its own economy more competitive in the world economy, but also to help steer the world economy toward open trade, expanding markets, financial stability, and sustained growth enjoyed by as many countries as possible.

To achieve balanced and sustainable growth for the U.S. and global economy, the NSS 2010 calls for U.S.-led efforts to prevent economic imbalances and financial excesses. It also calls for efforts to increase U.S. exports while encouraging other countries to import more U.S. products and services, shift to greater domestic demand abroad, enhance the performance of such international institutions as the G-20, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and dampen international economic crime. In addition, the NSS 2010 acknowledges awareness that the world economy is becoming two-tiered—with Europe, Asia, China, and India experiencing

steady growth, but other regions lagging behind. Accordingly, it calls for assistance policies that can help make poor countries more prosperous. It particularly cites sub-Saharan Africa as needing economic and development assistance in several areas, including good governance, improvements to agriculture, and health care.

In its treatment of values, the NSS 2010 asserts that because the United States believes some values are universal, including democracy and human rights, it should work to promote them worldwide. Promoting them in effective ways makes sense, it states, not only for idealistic reasons, but also because the spread of these values encourages peace, international cooperation, and a friendly stance toward the United States. The problem today, it further states, is that the spread of democracy and human rights has stalled in worrisome ways. It points out that whereas some autocratic governments have suppressed democracy and human rights in the name of economic modernity and national unity, some authoritarian governments, while brandishing ostensibly democratic credentials, have taken such steps as impeding the electoral process and undermining civil society. Such trends, it argues, are not worldwide, but are prevalent in enough regions to spell trouble for the continued spread of democracy and human rights.

Faced with this challenge, the NSS 2010 states, the United States can best respond by setting a powerful example. Accordingly, it calls for policies that prohibit torture, counter terrorism legally, balance the imperatives of secrecy and transparency, protect civil liberties, uphold the rule of law, and draw strength from diversity. In acting abroad, it states, the United States should strive to ensure that new and fragile democracies deliver tangible improvements for their citizens. In dealing with nondemocratic regimes, the NSS 2010 endorses principled engagement in the form of a dual-track approach. This requires the United States to improve government-to-government relations and use the resulting dialogue to advance human rights, while engaging civil society and peaceful political opposition. In addition, it calls for U.S. policies that recognize the legitimacy of all peaceful democratic movements, support women's rights, strengthen international norms against corruption, build

broader coalitions to advance universal values, and promote the right to access information. Finally, it calls for efforts to promote human dignity by meeting such basic needs as health care and access to food.

Promoting International Order. The NSS 2010 calls for creation of an international order that is not only just and sustainable, but also capable of handling the new challenges of the 21st century. Anchored in the premise that the international architecture inherited from the Cold War is breaking down, it asserts that a new international order must bind nations together in a web of shared interests, accepted rules of the road, a commitment to collective action, multinational institutions, and common strategies—all of which provide a growing capacity to handle such new-era challenges as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, regional conflicts, economic troubles, climate change, pandemic disease, and international crime.

As used by NSS 2010, the term *international order* does not refer to a single hierarchical structure in the manner of the United Nations, but instead implies a functioning, flexible cluster of likeminded nations that choose to act together in pursuit of their common interests. A key feature is that this international order is to be created through cooperation by its member nations, is to be as large and powerful as possible, and is to provide a usable framework for collective action by coalitions focused on handling specific challenges. While acknowledging that creating such an international order will be difficult, the NSS 2010 states that the effort is imperative, and that if the United States leads wisely and works closely with likeminded nations, progress is achievable. It further states that unless such an international order is created, the forces of instability and disorder will undermine global security. Accordingly, the NSS 2010 puts forth a four-part plan for this endeavor:

- ensure strong alliances
- build cooperation with other 21st-century centers of influence
- strengthen institutions and mechanisms for cooperation
- sustain broad cooperation on key global challenges.

As articulated by the NSS 2010, America's security alliances, especially those in Europe and Asia, will provide a strong foundation for the new international order. The NSS 2010 argues that these alliances—and their resulting patterns of close cooperation among the United States and its many allies—provide potent force multipliers that permit participants to pursue more demanding security goals than otherwise would be possible by those members acting alone. The NSS 2010 also makes clear that the Nation will continue participating in these alliances in traditional ways, including multilateral defense planning and stronger regional deterrence postures, aimed at protecting their security against old and new threats. But it also states that the United States will lead efforts to revitalize and reform these alliances so that they can handle new challenges.

In Europe, the NSS 2010 calls for U.S. policies aimed at preserving the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a vibrant, revitalized, and effective alliance that can handle the full range of 21st-century security challenges, while partnering with the European Union to bring security and democracy to Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and to resolve conflicts in the Caucasus and Cyprus. It states that NATO's new strategic concept will provide an opportunity to pursue alliance reforms, but it does not specify what such reforms should include. In Asia, the NSS 2010 calls for policies aimed at deepening and updating U.S. alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand to reflect new-era Asian dynamics while preserving security and promoting prosperity for those countries. It particularly emphasizes U.S. efforts to modernize alliances with Japan and Korea in order to face evolving security challenges, foster equal relationships, and preserve a solid foundation for the continuing presence of U.S. military forces there. The NSS 2010 also cites America's close relations with Canada and Mexico as central to North American security and economic progress.

The NSS 2010's call for building cooperation with other 21st-century centers of influence reflects awareness that several countries and regions are acquiring greater power and asserting themselves more aggressively on the world stage. It singles out China, India, and Russia as key actors with whom the United States needs cooperative bilateral relationships for addressing

common problems. It cites the rise of the G–20 as an example of the growing shift toward greater cooperation between traditional powers and emerging centers of influence. It identifies Asia as an entire region that is acquiring greater economic and political weight in world affairs. It calls for deep, enduring, and growing U.S. ties with countries of the region anchored in mutual interests, close security collaboration with friends and allies, flourishing economic and trade relations aimed at enhancing American exports, and cooperation with such multilateral Asian institutions as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia Pacific Economic Forum, Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the East Asia Summit.

The NSS 2010’s approach to China reflects the region-wide U.S. strategy in Asia. It seeks a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship with China. While stating that the United States will monitor China’s military modernization program to ensure that American allies are not endangered, the NSS 2010 welcomes a China that plays a responsible leadership role in handling security challenges, encourages China to make choices that contribute to peace, security, and prosperity as China’s influence grows, and encourages a continued reduction in tensions between China and Taiwan. The NSS 2010 calls for a growing strategic partnership with India based on common interests, shared values, and commitments to help solve key security challenges. The NSS 2010 also asserts that the United States has an abiding interest in a strong, peaceful, and prosperous Russia that respects international norms. While stating that the United States will support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia’s neighbors, it calls for a growing partnership with Russia in such critical areas as nuclear arms reductions and confronting violent extremism, especially in Afghanistan. In addition, the NSS 2010 calls attention to the importance of constructive, cooperation-building U.S. policies toward Indonesia, Brazil, friendly Arab countries in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, and South Africa. Across Africa, it urges a strong U.S. engagement focused on assistance policies that help foster good governance, economic development, and conflict resolution.

As part of U.S. strategy for promoting a new international order, the NSS 2010 calls for efforts to strengthen institutions and mechanisms for cooperation. It encourages a more robust and effective United Nations, including Security Council reforms, a more efficient civil service, and strengthened operational capacity for peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, development assistance, and promotion of human rights. It calls for U.S.-led efforts to promote common actions through a wide range of frameworks and coalitions, accompanied by policies to spur and harness a new diversity of instruments and institutions. The emerging division of labor would be based on effectiveness, competency, and long-term reliability. It envisions progress on a host of fronts, including international financial institutions, multilateral development banks, and the IMF as well as leveraged policies for fostering economic progress in poor regions. It also calls for policies aimed at investing in improved regional capabilities, including such bodies as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Organization of the Islamic Conference, African Union, Organization of American States, ASEAN, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. In guiding these regional bodies, the NSS 2010 calls for a strategic approach that takes into account a sensible division of roles and responsibilities and that encourages reforms and innovations in order to address emerging security and economic priorities in multiple areas.

Finally, the approach put forth by the NSS 2010 urges sustained, broad, global cooperation on a host of 21st-century challenges that have been resistant to progress in the past. It argues that global cooperation on them is necessary because no single nation, or even group of nations, can handle them alone. It especially focuses on addressing climate change, peacekeeping to control armed conflicts, prevention of genocide and mass atrocities, international justice, pandemics and infectious diseases, world health, transnational criminal threats, safeguarding the global commons and cyberspace, and access to the Arctic. International cooperation in these areas, the NSS 2010 argues, can help promote progress on difficult challenges that transcend individual regions in ways that often make them truly global.

Strengths, Shortcomings, and Lingering Issues. By any measure, the NSS 2010 is a thorough, articulate, and reasoned document that clearly spells out main directions for future U.S. national security strategy as seen by the Obama administration. Written in a manner evidently designed to capture widespread bipartisan consensus in the American political system, it draws major criticism mostly from opposite ends of the spectrum—that is, some critics see it as too liberal and others as too conservative. If a well-conceived national security strategy is defined as a strategic construct for pursuing multiple goals in complementary ways, the NSS 2010 meets this standard. Judged in such technical terms, it is as good, or better, than similar national security strategy studies written by previous administrations. By being so comprehensive, it performs its intended role of helping to guide the multiple U.S. departments and agencies that play central roles in carrying out national security strategy. It leaves few subjects untouched, even if it sometimes pursues breadth at the expense of depth.

A key strength is that the NSS 2010 defines national security in broad terms that include not only traditional military and security issues, but also the full set of wider issues that animate U.S. foreign policy and diplomacy, including economic policies, political relations with many countries, institutional relationships, and developmental policies in key regions. Focusing on national economic renewal, its whole-of-government approach makes sense in an emerging era in which the success of U.S. national security strategy will be heavily influenced by the availability of resources and the ability of the U.S. Government to orchestrate multiple policy instruments. Emphasis on a strategy of U.S. engagement abroad, coupled with its call for sustained multilateral cooperation, clearly responds favorably to the many allies, partners, and friends abroad looking for this blend of leadership and collaboration from the United States. Its emphasis on working with the G-20 to handle the world economy reflects accelerating globalization dynamics as well as the need for common policies by many nations. Its call for promoting democratic values mainly by the strength of American example and through quiet diplomacy may seem insufficiently assertive to some

critics, but it does not coddle dictators. It does reflect an official judgment that this is the best practical way to make progress today.

Virtually all of the dozens of security policy initiatives put forth by NSS 2010 have generated controversy. The best way to evaluate this document is not to ask whether it is correct in its handling of myriad details, but instead to ask whether it correctly judges strategic fundamentals. In this arena, it is fair to observe that in trying to strike a balance between idealism and realism, the NSS 2010's emphasis on shaping the future world, rather than being victimized by unwelcome trends, reflects sound reasoning that has been shared by many past administrations. The notion, thus, is not new; the question is whether, and to what degree, it can be accomplished. Such an analysis needs to be conducted in light of the many frustrations encountered by past administrations when they set out to shape the future of a rapidly evolving world that responds to many complexities, not just American leadership. Whereas optimists might judge that important successes are achievable, pessimists, especially those animated by concern that U.S. power is declining, might judge that the opposite will be true. While the debate between them will be settled only when the future unfolds, what can be said now is that the NSS 2010 strikes a hopeful tone partly because it is preoccupied with spelling out a large set of goals and their supporting policies—in isolation from constraints on pursuing them. Along the way, it does not offer much analysis of whether these goals are feasibly achievable and whether their policies will be strong and agile enough to get the job fully done. To the extent that the NSS 2010 errs in strategic terms, it may be on the side of implying that more can be accomplished than actually will be the case.

In any event, the NSS 2010 puts forth an undeniably ambitious global agenda for the United States to pursue as a leader of many alliances, coalitions, and endeavors. These range from handling the high politics of the global security system and world economy to carrying out gritty wars and reconstruction efforts across the Greater Middle East and adjoining regions. Nowhere does it discuss in any detail limits to America's strategic interests, geographic and functional areas that fall outside these limits, responsibilities that should be carried out by countries other than the United States,

and the need to set priorities so that vital goals are attained even at the expense of not achieving less important ones. Critics might judge that, although the NSS 2010 cautions against overextending U.S. foreign involvements, it establishes a sweeping strategy framework that risks falling into this trap. While only the future will tell, an appropriate conclusion is that between the poles of full disengagement and assertive engagement almost everywhere, there is a middle ground that calls for strong but selective engagement on a manageable list of strategic issues where success is both mandatory and achievable. Whether emerging U.S. strategy will find this middle ground is to be seen, but the NSS 2010 does not cause the most vital goals to be highlighted.

The NSS 2010 tries to establish a sense of focus at least for the near term by identifying its six top security priorities. However, questions can be raised about this list and the analyses supporting it. No one would quarrel with the goals of defending the U.S. homeland, defeating al Qaeda and its affiliates, stopping nuclear proliferation, and protecting cyberspace—or with needing to stabilize failed states that have strategic importance. The goals of winding down the war in Iraq while succeeding in Afghanistan are broadly shared across the United States. But the goal of advancing Middle East security and stability is bereft of actionable steps of what should be done if, as seems increasingly possible, Iran acquires nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Assuming that war against Iran is rejected as a viable choice, presumably a U.S.-led containment and deterrence regime would need to be created that compels Iran to keep its nuclear weapons holstered and devoid of major influence across the region. Can such a regime be created, how would it be established, how would it operate, and would it be successful? The NSS 2010 is silent on this vital topic in ways that could neuter its Middle East relevance if Iran indeed becomes a nuclear power. Nor did the NSS 2010 anticipate the wave of revolutions that subsequently broke out in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and elsewhere in the Middle East—all of which will need to be factored into new U.S. regional policies as the future unfolds.

Likewise, the priorities offered do not even mention the still paramount goals of keeping Europe and Asia stable and peaceful. If these two huge, powerful regions somehow plunge into instability, they will take the rest of the world with them. By not mentioning them, does the NSS 2010 imply that handling these two regions is no longer serious and demanding enough to be listed as a top security priority? If so, it will be the first major U.S. strategy study to reach such a conclusion in many decades. Part of the problem stems from the NSS 2010's tendency to be so preoccupied with analyzing global trends and policies that, the Middle East aside, it pays insufficient attention to the various regions. Europe and Asia are especially noticeable casualties because they have always figured so prominently in U.S. national security strategy, and still do so in many important ways. The NSS 2010 does briefly examine Europe and Asia as part of its general discussion of creating a new international order. Here, it raises the idea of creating stronger regional deterrence postures in those regions and elsewhere, but it offers no further insights on how this important, consequence-laden idea can be carried out in political-military terms. Its brief treatment invites more questions than answers. Nor does it answer an even more basic question: How are the European and Asian security systems to be structured and operated in the coming years—similar to now, or differently? Failure to answer this question in adequate depth creates a noticeable gap in the NSS 2010.

Moreover, questions can be raised about the NSS 2010's discussion of whether and how a future international security order is to take shape. Clearly, the idea of creating a stronger consensus for managing global challenges makes sense. But as the NSS 2010 acknowledges, a truly expansive international order cannot be imposed from the top. Instead, it must emerge from the bottom up in ways anchored in the mutual interests of participating nations. At issue is whether, in a world of growing pluralism, such a harmonization of interests, especially among the big powers, is possible. Geopolitical theorists aware of history likely would raise doubts by arguing that in an era of intensifying multipolarity, growing big-power competition is more likely than not, and that before something as visionary as a cooperative international order can be created,

a stable structure of security affairs—and even a stable balance of power—must first be established.

In its preoccupation with handling such present-day dangers as global terrorism and WMD proliferation, the NSS 2010 tends to presume that today's lack of deep rivalry and competition among the major powers can be taken for granted as an enduring characteristic. But is this a wise presumption? Today's relative tranquility is a historical anomaly that may not be permanent. In the past, settings of amorphous pluralism among big powers have tended to give way to growing political conflict among them, followed by a drift toward tense multipolarity and culminated by a descent into confrontational bipolarity. Is this historical pattern destined to repeat itself? Will such major powers as the United States, Europe, Russia, China, Japan, and India remain at peace, or will they succumb to the experiences of the past by becoming at loggerheads with each other?

Answering this question in forward-looking ways does not require accepting rigid theories of historical determinism. But it does require awareness of underlying geopolitical dynamics at work among the big powers now and in the future. It also requires acceptance of the proposition that preserving stability among the major powers may not be automatic. Instead, it could require hard work by the United States—and if major power rivalry starts taking hold, the United States will have to work even harder to contain it. Pursuing such a difficult agenda would require a U.S. global strategy anchored more heavily in concepts of geopolitical management than now. The NSS 2010 does not provide such concepts. Rather, it remains largely silent on a strategic task that, to one degree or another, could become an increasingly important U.S. preoccupation.

Geopolitical management of the future roles of Russia and China especially enters the strategic equation here because of their power, geographical locations astride Europe and Asia, and capacities for causing both good and ill. Today's reality is that China is rapidly emerging as a regional and global power, and Russia is trying to reassert itself in similar ways. Their future strategic agendas are unclear. However, if China emerges as a menace to the

United States and its allies in Asia, and if Russian reemerges as a menace to Europe and a rival of the United States in the Middle East, both will bring growing troubles to U.S. national security strategy. If these two major powers start acting in ways that require counterbalancing and restraining, it will be the United States that will need to perform this task. Perhaps the NSS 2010 correctly judges that close cooperation with those two countries can predominate and that, apart from taking precautionary steps at the margins as a hedge against relations with them souring, future U.S. strategy need not think in classical geopolitical terms in dealing with them. But if NSS 2010 errs on this score, it risks being wrong on something so basic that the core concept of creating a new international order is rendered far more difficult, and maybe invalid. Indeed, the underlying global security system could become a source of future challenges, not an engine for solving them. In such a more dangerous, less tractable world, U.S. national security strategy would need to be perhaps even fundamentally different from the vision put forth by NSS 2010.

Finally, the NSS 2010 has a gap that flows from one of its main strengths. In its discussion of a whole-of-government approach, it appropriately discusses the key roles that many different policy instruments must play in carrying out not only national security strategy, but also traditional foreign policy and diplomacy. Along the way, it addresses military and defense issues in ways that mainly articulate only basic principles, without discussing in any serious way the details of force posture, improvement plans, overseas presence, employment strategies, and allied military contributions. Nor does it discuss the military forces of adversary nations—indeed, its political treatment of adversaries is mostly confined to North Korea and Iran—or contingencies in which U.S. forces might be involved. Perhaps this absence of deeper treatment is not a weakness given the larger purposes and messages of the document, but previous national security strategy studies typically paid more attention to military affairs. This illuminates the importance of examining those five official studies on military and defense affairs also published in 2010.