

# U.S. National Security Strategy: Strategy, Globalization and Liberalism

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According to the *DOD Dictionary of Military Terms*, the National Security Strategy (NSS) is a document approved by the President of the United States for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security. The current U.S. National Security Strategy, issued in May 2010 by the Obama Administration, provides strategic guidance to face a broad and complex array of threats and challenges to the U.S. national security. The NSS 2010 strategic approach to these challenges diverges from the previous NSS in some important aspects, reflecting a different policy, political thinking and values from the current Administration; however, the main goal remains the same, the safeguard of U.S. security interests. Those interests include the security of the U.S., its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners; a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system; respect for universal values at home and around the world; and an international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges (NSS 2010, 7).

This brief essay analyses the concept of *Strategy* and presents the main reasons for considering that the NSS 2010 is a national strategic guidance rooted in the liberal view of international politics. It also discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the NSS 2010 and recommends changes to strategy to promote and enhance national security.

This paper is an analytical essay in the realm of strategic studies, therefore, grounded on the strategic reference paradigm (see figure 1). According to Yarger, *strategy* is the “disciplined calculation of overarching objectives, concepts, and resources within acceptable bounds of risk to create more favorable future outcomes than might otherwise exist if left to chance or the hands of others” (Yarger 2006, 5). It bridges the gap between the realities of today and a desired future, considering the best way to apply resources to achieve desired results in a specific strategic environment over time. In the context of the State, strategy deals with the employment of instruments of power (political/diplomatic, economic, military, informational, and others) to “achieve the political objectives of the

State in cooperation or in competition with other actors pursuing their own - possibly conflicting - objectives" (Yarger 2006, 5).

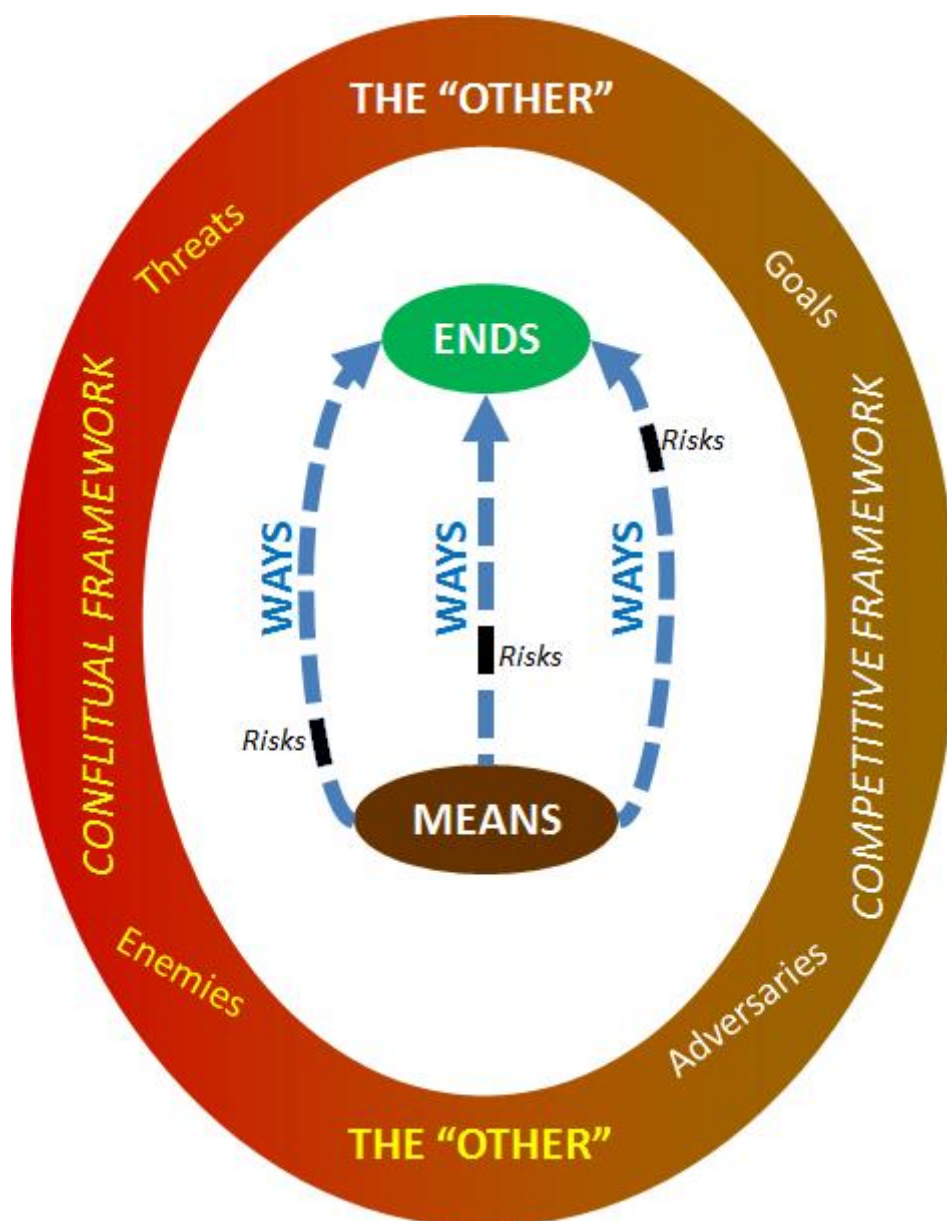


Figure 1. The strategic paradigm.

Source: Created by author.

Strategy differs from planning because strategy has distinct attributes and differs in its scope, assumptions, and premises. Both strategy and planning use ends, ways, and means, and are bounded by the criteria of suitability, feasibility, and acceptability, but strategy has its own inherent logic that can be understood and applied (Yarger 2006, 5). According to Luttwak this logic of strategy is paradoxical "very different from the

ordinary “linear” logic by which we live in all other spheres of life” (Luttwak 2001, 2)<sup>1</sup>. Luttwak illustrates this paradoxical logic by arguing that “only in the paradoxical realm of strategy would the choice arise at all, because it is only in war that a bad road can be good *precisely because it is bad* and may therefore be less strongly defended or even left unguarded by the enemy” (Luttwak 2001, 3).

These considerations about the essence of strategy were synthesized and systematized by Arthur F. Lykke, the father of the Army War College’s Ends-Ways-Means strategic model. In Lykke’s model the ends are “objectives,” the ways are the “concepts” for accomplishing the objectives, and the means are the “resources” for supporting the concepts (Yarger 2008, 46). For Lykke, this general model can be used as a basis for the formulation of any type strategy, depending upon the element of power employed. (Lykke 2001, 179-183).

The NSS 2010 has all these strategic ingredients (see Appendix to this essay). It begins by addressing the U.S. enduring national interests (security, prosperity, values, and international order). For each of these interests, it defines the respective goals (ends), and the approaches and actions (ways) that U.S. will employ to achieve those ends. It also defines guidance for the resources the country will mobilize to implement the ways, referring that in order to succeed the U.S. must update, balance, and integrate all of the tools of American power and work with allies and partners to do the same (NSS 2010, 14).

Globalization is a central theme in the NSS 2010. For Thomas Friedman, globalization is the international system that replaced the *Cold War* system and, like that system, it has its own rules, logic, pressures, incentives, and moving parts that will and do affect everyone’s company, country, community, and armed forces. It represents the integration and interdependence of markets, finance, technology, and telecommunications in a way that deeply affects all sectors of human societies (social, military, environmental, economics, law, etc.) and is built around three balances of power. The first is still the balance of power between states and states; the second one is the balance between states and the “super markets” – the 25 largest global stocks found in currency markets; and the third is the balance between states and super-empowered people. All this necessary balances are now pursued by states and other players and are quite different from the *Cold War* period, where the national interest was defended in a state based power structure, with “story of states, balancing states, confronting states and aligning with states” (Friedman 2000, 52). However, as Nye refers, globalization has made the national boundaries more porous, but not irrelevant (Nye 2007, 205). Therefore, the “nation-state” is and will remain the most preferred form of political organization worldwide; and that is the reason why nation-states like the U.S. need security strategies to protect American people and their interests.

In the NSS 2010, the globalization theme is embedded in the strategic context and drives the options throughout the document. President Obama refers in the Introduction that “the success of free nations, open markets, and social progress in recent decades has accelerated globalization. This has opened the doors of opportunity around the globe,

extended democracy to hundreds of millions of people, and made peace possible among the major powers. Yet globalization has also intensified the dangers we face from international terrorism and the spread of deadly technologies, to economic upheaval and a changing climate". In the NSS 2010, globalization drives options in the realm of internal strengthening, trade, and security. For the U.S., is important to ensure the world's best-educated workforce, a private sector that fosters innovation, and citizens and businesses that can access affordable health care to compete in a globalized economy. Likewise, the U.S. trade policy is an important part of the effort to capitalize on the opportunities presented by globalization, but will also be part of the effort to equip Americans to compete (NSS 2010, 32). Finally, in the realm of security, the use of globalized networks by terrorists groups and today's open and global financial system are conditions that expose the U.S. to global threats. For the U.S. the actors that pose a threat to national security are abusing the global financial system to raise, move, and safeguard funds that support their illicit activities or from which they derive profit (NSS 2010, 33).

Within this strategic paradigm of globalization is possible to identify in the NSS 2010 a profound liberal view of international politics. Liberalism is a theory of both government within states and good governance between states and peoples worldwide. Unlike Realism, which regards the "international" as an anarchic realm, Liberals seek to project values of order, liberty, justice and toleration into international relations. The four main components of the Liberalism are juridical equality, democracy, liberty, and the free market. For the Liberals, domestic and international institutions are required to protect and nurture these values. According to the Liberal perspective, the problems of globalization need to be addressed by a combination of strong democratic states in the core of the international system, robust regimes, and open markets and institutions (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, 110)<sup>2</sup>. In accordance with this perspective, the NSS 2010 has a liberal approach to international politics. Pursuing comprehensive engagement; promoting a just and sustainable international order; invest in the capacity of strong and capable partners; promote democracy, human rights and dignity; promote open markets; and strengthen institutions and mechanisms for cooperation, are the U.S. main ways to achieve strategic ends, but also liberal values that are enshrined in the NSS 2010.

In coherence with this liberal approach, the NSS 2010 presents a trend to use primarily Soft Power instead of Hard Power. Hard Power is a direct form of using coercion; military power and economic power are both examples of Hard Power that can be used to induce others to change their position. Soft Power is an indirect way to exercise power, maximizing the capability to attract. A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness. It coopts people rather than coerces them. As Nye refers, it is just as important to set the agenda in world politics and attract others as it is to force them to change through the threat or use of military or economic weapons (Nye 2002, 552). In the NSS 2010 the intent of maximizing Soft Power is spread in the entire document. Some examples are "keeping with the focus on the foundation of our strength and influence, we are promoting universal values abroad (...), and will not seek to impose these values through force" (NSS 2010, 5) and "the U.S. will

work to remain an attractive and influential partner” (NSS 2010, 45).

Assess strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. Security Strategy is a complex and delicate task. Not only because the NSS is the most important strategic document of the U.S. (still the most important player in international politics), but also because the criteria used for assessment of these type of strategies are generally vague, due to different perspectives and concepts.

Anyway, two major strengths of the NSS 2010 can be its comprehensiveness and the liberal essence of its approaches. It is a comprehensive strategy in the scope; it addresses the most relevant security issues for the U.S. in the current strategic environment and provides guidance for developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security. In addition, it clearly addresses the ends that the strategy is trying to achieve, and the ways to achieve those results. One other strength of the NSS 2010 is its liberal approach. In today’s globalized, but very different world, the U.S. understood the benefits of the Liberal perspective and signaled the cooperative basis of its power in a number of ways. First, in common with liberal democratic principles, the U.S. is an example to other members of international society in so far as its political system is open and allows different voices to be heard. This aspect, identified in the NSS 2010, is increasingly important for populations worldwide, as we see in Egypt, Libya and Syria. It is also important for the U.S., because it fosters a positive and attractive image. Second, the U.S. advocates a global free-trade regime in accordance with the idea that free trade brings benefits to all participants. Third, the U.S. appeared to its allies at least as a reluctant hegemon that would not seek to exploit its significant power-political advantage. Fourth, and most importantly, the U.S. created and participated in a range of important international institutions that constrained its actions (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, 116). In today’s multipolar world, within the globalization, and with the empowerment of the “human being” – reflected in the human security concept – the Liberal approach is probably the most appropriate way to safeguard national interests.

Some weaknesses, mainly related with the structure of the strategy, can be pointed out. First, the NSS 2010 does not clearly define the threats to U.S. security; it just identifies broad security challenges. In the realm of strategy, what drives options are the conflicting goals of “the other” in conjunction with the definition of our own goals; otherwise is just planning. It does not define priorities, milestones, and performance measures to gauge results; these aspects are very important to assess the effectiveness of any strategy. It does not identify also the risks associated with the strategic options of the NSS 2010; in the strategic paradigm, options always imply risks. Finally, it does not addresses how it relates to other strategies’ goals, objectives, and activities – and to subordinate levels of government and their plans to implement the strategy. One last point related with Africa’s strategic importance. The NSS 2010 does not give much importance to Africa; it refers that the cornerstone of the engagement to galvanize collective action that can serve common security interests is the relationship between the “U.S. and our close friends and allies in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East”. Africa is simply not mentioned (not even identified in the U.S. “area of focus”)

reflecting a lower strategic importance given to the African continent; and, as we know, Africa is a crucial source of energy, strategic and ordinary minerals, and precious gems. Beside other security, diplomatic and economic interests, West Africa holds 60 billion barrels of oil reserves and large natural gas deposits, which are expected to comprise a quarter of U.S. petroleum imports by the year 2015.

The last point of this paper is to recommend changes to the strategy. In order to enhance and to promote national security, the main recommendation is to improve the weaknesses presented previously, related to the structure of the NSS 2010 and increase the importance given to Africa. Adding and changing those issues will bring clarity and, ultimately, will permit to validate the strategy against the inherent logic of suitability, feasibility, and acceptability<sup>3</sup>.

To conclude, this essay analyzed the concept of Strategy and presented the main reasons for considering that the NSS 2010 is a national strategic guidance rooted in the liberal view of international politics. So far, the NSS 2010 has been a well-conceived and successful security strategy, safeguarding the U.S. enduring national interests (security, prosperity, values, and international order). Great part of this success is due to its liberal approach, by projecting values of order, liberty, justice and toleration into international relations. This approach has allowing the U.S. to foster a positive and attractive image by maximizing the use of Soft Power, to appear to its allies at least as a reluctant hegemon that would not seek to exploit its significant power-political advantage, to promote a global free-trade regime, and to shape a globalized world advanced by U.S. leadership. However, the pattern of conflict and insecurity that we have seen at the beginning of the twenty-first century suggests that the liberal democracy remains at best an incomplete project (Baylis, Smith and Owens 2008, 120). In many parts of the world, anti-liberal values of *warlordism*, torture, intolerance and injustice will remain as threats to the Liberal values and therefore to the U.S. National Security.

#### **Appendix - Interests, Ends, Ways & Means to the U.S. National Security Strategy 2010.**

INTERESTS	ENDS	WAYS	MEANS
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The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners.	1. Strengthen Security and Resilience at Home	Enhance Security at Home. Effectively Manage Emergencies. Empowering Communities to Counter Radicalization. Improve Resilience Through Increased Public-Private Partnerships. Engage with Communities and Citizens.	<i>To succeed, we must update, balance, and integrate all of the tools of American power and work with our allies and partners to do the same. Our military must maintain its conventional superiority and, as long as nuclear weapons exist, our nuclear deterrent capability, while continuing to enhance its capacity to defeat asymmetric threats, preserve access to the global commons, and strengthen partners. We must invest in diplomacy and development capabilities and institutions in a way that complements and reinforces our global partners. Our intelligence capabilities must continuously evolve to identify and characterize conventional and asymmetric threats and provide timely insight. And we must integrate our approach to homeland security with our broader national security approach.</i>
	2. Disrupt, Dismantle, and Defeat Al-Qa'ida and its Violent Extremist Affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Around the World.	Prevent Attacks on and in the Homeland. Strengthen Aviation Security. Deny Terrorists Weapons of Mass Destruction. Deny Al-Qa'ida the Ability to Threaten the American People, Our Allies, Our Partners and Our Interests Overseas. Increase the security and capacity of our partners in this region. Deny Safe Havens and Strengthen At-Risk States. Deliver Swift and Sure Justice. Resist Fear and Overreaction. Contrast Al-Qa'ida's Intent to Destroy with Our Constructive Vision.	
	3. Reverse the Spread of Nuclear and Biological Weapons and Secure Nuclear Materials.	Pursue the Goal of a World Without Nuclear Weapons. Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Present a Clear Choice to Iran and North Korea. Secure Vulnerable Nuclear Weapons and Material.	
	4. Advance Peace, Security, and Opportunity in the Greater Middle East	Support Peaceful Nuclear Energy. Counter Biological Threats.	
	5. Invest in the Capacity of Strong and Capable Partners	Complete a Responsible Transition as We End the War in Iraq. Pursue Arab-Israeli Peace. Promote a Responsible Iran.	
	6. Secure Cyberspace	Foster Security and Reconstruction in the Aftermath of Conflict. Pursue Sustainable and Responsible Security Systems in At-Risk States. Prevent the Emergence of Conflict.  Investing in People and Technology. Strengthening Partnerships.	
<b>INTERESTS</b>	<b>ENDS</b>	<b>WAYS</b>	<b>MEANS</b>

A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity.	7. Strengthen Education and Human Capital	<p>Improve Education at All Levels. Invest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Education (STEM). Increase International Education and Exchange. Pursue Comprehensive Immigration Reform.</p>	
	8. Enhance Science, Technology, and Innovation	<p>Transform our Energy Economy. Invest in Research. Expand International Science Partnerships. Employ Technology to Protect our Nation. Leverage and Grow our Space Capabilities.</p>	
	9. Achieve Balanced and Sustainable Growth	<p>Prevent Renewed Instability in the Global Economy. Save More And Export More. Shift To Greater Domestic Demand Abroad. Open Foreign Markets to Our Products and Services. Build Cooperation with Our International Partners. Deterring Threats to the International Financial System.</p>	
	10. Accelerate Sustainable Development	<p>Increase Investments in Development. Invest in the Foundations of Long-Term Development. Exercise Leadership in the Provision of Global Public Goods.</p>	
	11. Spend Taxpayers' Dollars Wisely	<p>Reduce the Deficit. Reform Acquisition and Contracting Processes. Increase Transparency</p>	
<b>INTERESTS</b>	<b>ENDS</b>	<b>WAYS</b>	<b>MEANS</b>



Respect for universal values at home and around the world.	12. Strengthen the Power of Our Example	Prohibit Torture without Exception or Equivocation. Legal Aspects of Countering Terrorism. Balance the Imperatives of Secrecy and Transparency. Protect Civil Liberties, Privacy, and Oversight. Uphold the Rule of Law. Draw Strength from Diversity.	
	13. Promote Democracy and Human Rights Abroad	Ensuring that new and fragile democracies deliver tangible improvements for their citizens. Practicing Principled Engagement with Non-Democratic Regimes. Recognizing the Legitimacy of All Peaceful Democratic Movements. Supporting the Rights of Women and Girls. Strengthening International Norms Against Corruption. Building a Broader Coalition of Actors to Advance Universal Values.	
	14. Promote Dignity by Meeting Basic Needs	Marshaling New Technologies and Promoting the Right to Access Information.  Pursuing a Comprehensive Global Health Strategy. Promoting Food Security. Leading Efforts to Address Humanitarian Crises.	
An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.	15. Ensure Strong Alliances	Strengthening security relationships with European, Asian and North American allies.	
	16. Build Cooperation with Other 21st Century Centers of Influence	Building broader cooperation on areas of mutual interest in Asia, Russia and with Emerging Centers of Influence.	
	17. Strengthen Institutions and Mechanisms for Cooperation.	Enhance Cooperation with and Strengthen the United Nations. Pursue Decisions through a Wide Range of Frameworks and Coalitions. Invest in Regional Capabilities.	
	18. Sustain Broad Cooperation on Key Global Challenges	Climate Change. Peacekeeping and Armed Conflict. Pandemics and Infectious Disease. Transnational Criminal Threats and Threats to Governance. Safeguarding the Global Commons. Arctic Interests.	

\* Este texto é um breve ensaio de estudos estratégicos que resulta da frequência do

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<sup>1</sup> Luttwak, Edward. 2001. *The Logic of War and Peace*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Baylis, J., S. Smith, and P. Owens. 2008. *The Globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*. 4<sup>a</sup> ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Suitability: Will the attainment of the objectives using the instruments of power in the manner stated accomplish the strategic effects desired? Feasibility: Can the strategic concept be executed with the resources available? Acceptability: Do the strategic effects sought justify the objectives pursued, the methods used to achieve them, and the costs in blood, treasure, and potential insecurity for the domestic and international communities?