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A Brookings Forum

Brookings Scholars Evaluate and Analyze President's National Security Strategy Paper

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Moderator:

James B. Steinberg

Vice President and Director, Foreign Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution

Ivo H. Daalder

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution

James M. Lindsay

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy Studies, The Brookings Institution

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MR. RON NESSEN: Good morning and welcome to Brookings. I'm sorry that we're just slightly late getting started. We're going to have our moderator, Jim Steinberg, join us very shortly. Our program this morning will feature Jim Steinberg as the moderator. He is the Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Studies program here at Brookings and he'll be joined on the panel by Ivo Daalder and Jim Lindsay. These three scholars have prepared an analysis and evaluation of President Bush's new national security strategy document that was issued a couple days ago.

So while we're waiting for Jim Steinberg's arrival, I'm going to turn it over to Jim Lindsay and Ivo. They will begin to outline their evaluation and analysis of the president's national security strategy document and Jim will join us very shortly.



MR. IVO H. DAALDER: Thanks, Ron. Thanks, everybody, for showing up early on a Friday morning, at least early for Brookings kind of places. We generally don't have briefings this early, which is one of the reasons perhaps that we're not all here on time.

What Jim and I will do is summarize the basics, the key points of the paper that all of you have, the policy brief that will be available on the Web or it probably already is on the Web but will be available as a policy brief formatted publication very shortly. I will start off by summarizing what the national security strategy says and then do it in our words rather than in the national security strategy's words, and then Jim will give us the highlights of our evaluation of that strategy.

Many of you, particularly if you have not actually read the document, may have thought that this strategy was about preemption. It's not. Preemption has a total of three paragraphs in a 31-page document. This is about much more than preemption. It is, in fact, the most comprehensive statement of this administration's view of the world and the American role in it.

And the essence of that strategy is, first, the recognition that the United States has unparalleled powers and that, second, it ought to be used for three particular purposes, and let me quote, because I think it summarizes as best as one can, the president in his letter that accompanied the strategy. He says, "We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the

great powers. And we will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent." It's this three-pillars or three-pronged strategy that is at the heart of this document.

As an aside, it's curious that having set out that three-pronged strategy in the letter that accompanies the strategy the document then drops it and, in fact, never returns to this concept of defending, preserving and extending the peace. We, however, think that one way to understand and the best way to understand the strategy, is, in fact, to look at it in this three-pronged way.

So what do they say about preserving the peace? First, our enemies are clear. They are terrorists, tyrants and technology. They're bad people, evil people -- it's not mentioned but that's what that implied -- who are terrorists. The tyrants are rogue states. There is actually a very good definition of rogue states in the document. And thirdly, it is the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. That is our enemy. That is what needs to be defeated, not any great power, not Russia, not China, not now, not ever. It is terrorists, tyrants and technology.

And the way we're going to defeat the terrorists and tyrants and the technology is through a combination of prevention, preemption, defense and consequence management. Prevention implies diplomacy, arms control, though no treaty is ever mentioned in the document, export controls and dealing with failed states, which, and I'll come back to this, are in themselves a threat to peace.

Preemption is using military force before someone has used it against us in order to deal with an imminent threat, which can be the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by rogue states or used by terrorists.

Defense is missile defense, and consequence management is managing the consequences of the use of weapons of mass destruction in a way that mitigates their impact and therefore allows the society to function as quickly as it can.

That's the strategy on defending the peace.

The second prong, preserving the peace: 9/11, the argument is in the strategy, raised awareness of a common danger among all great powers and created a common interest to fighting terrorists and tyrants with weapons of mass destruction.

As President Bush in his cover letter says, "Today the international community has the best chance since the rising of the nation state in the 17th century to build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war."

And the essence of preserving the peace is building a new relationship with Russia and China; Russia, which has a new leadership, which has an enlightened leadership now sees, according to the strategy, the need to cooperate with the United

States in ways that were unthinkable during the Cold War. The strategy is quite uncritical about Russia. It doesn't mention, for example, the word "Chechnya."

And the same is true for China where there is a very, what international relations theorists would call functionalist notion that if you open up the economy, political liberalization will of necessity follow. As the strategy says, "In time China will find that social and political freedom is the only source of its greatness." And it's a very optimistic reading of China, particularly for an administration that after all came to power talking about China not as this great beacon of hope in terms of human rights and democracy but as a strategic competitor.

And finally there is a whole host of sections devoted to extending the peace, to dealing with weak and failing states for both strategic reasons and moral reasons. The strategic case is that weak and failing states, as Afghanistan shows, can create conditions in which terrorism flourishes, that dealing with failed states is a strategic requirement and it's also a moral requirement. As the strategy says, "When half the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day we have a moral need to do something about it."

And what are we going to do about it, according to the strategy? We're going to speak up about violations of human dignity, we're going to make democracy and human rights a central part of our bilateral relationships, we're going to encourage investment in free trade in order to open free markets, and finally the strategy notes that it's going to increase by 50 percent over the next three years the amount of financial assistance being made available by the United States to help these failed and weakening states to emerge and become part of the larger group of market democracies, as the previous administration would have put it.

So let me stop there -- that's how we summarize the strategy -- and then turn it over to Jim for some points on the evaluation and then we'll turn it over to Jim for some points on where the national security strategy fits into the larger concept of foreign policy in the document.



MR. JAMES M. LINDSAY: Thank you, Ivo. I think as Ivo has laid out, the strategy proposes a set of ambitious and I think laudable objectives for American foreign policy. I think it's certainly laudable of the administration to want to make the promotion of freedom and democracy a centerpiece of American foreign policy. The threat of rogue states and terrorist groups should be eliminated. There is a strategic and moral challenge posed by poverty in the Third World.

But in evaluating the strategy the real question is does it present a plan for achieving those objectives, and on that thought I think there are a number of deficiencies in the national strategy that it doesn't provide the kind of coherent and clear guide on how to achieve the very laudable objectives it sets forth, and I want to speak to four different tensions or problems in the document.

One is the core objective of promoting freedom runs in conflict with the subordinate goal of promoting its counter-terrorism policy.

The second problem is that the document raises the issue of preemption but fails to both lay out a framework for thinking about when to use preemption and also fails to recognize the limitations in preemption.

The third point has to do with the strategy's emphasis on the role of ad hoc coalitions in pursuing American objectives and it's neglecting the role that institutions can play in furthering U.S. interests.

And finally I want to talk a little bit about the inadequacy of the proposed economic assistance programs in dealing with the issue of failed states.

First, the question of freedom versus counter-terrorism, the national strategy talked at great length of promoting a balance of power in favor of freedom but in practice what it promotes is a balance of power in favor of counter-terrorism. And this is important because the two goals are often in conflict and we can see this in the current war on terrorism has led the United States to work very closely with countries like China, Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia that don't share America's commitment to freedom and liberty.

Now, the strategy itself doesn't acknowledge this tradeoff between the two goals, let alone provide a framework for how to judge the tradeoffs. The implicit message in the document is that counter-terrorism trumps freedom. As Ivo pointed out, the document commits the administration to speaking up candidly about violations of human dignity, but that commitment to candor doesn't show up in the national strategy document itself; actually while talking about freedom in the abstract it's not critical of any specific human rights abuses by any country. Ivo mentioned the absence of any mention of Chechnya. There's no criticism of China for Tibet or the suppression of democracy activists or religious activists. There's no criticism of the shift away from constitutional rule in Pakistan. Indeed, the document gives out a bit of compliment to Pakistan on its commitment to tolerance.

Now, any strategy, I think as Jim can attest, is going to be a gap between words and deeds and part of the goal of the strategy is to try to limit that gap, but I think the flaw in the strategy is by not having any plan for limiting the ability of authoritarian governments to exploit America's efforts in the war on terrorism maximizes the political cost to the United States. It seems to signal and certainly will be read by many people we're hoping to reach out to as saying that America cares much more about its own security than about the safety of others and is conceding to the broader problem of terrorist and failing states. Our support for authoritarian governments in the Middle East enables them to avoid political and economic reform and helps fuel anti-Americanism in many of these countries, sort of justifiably against the United States, talking about liberty

in the abstract, of propping up authoritarianism in the particular. So it can actually exacerbate the very problem that the strategy wants to tackle.

The second set of issues involves preemption. Now, I think it's important to emphasize right here that contrary to most media reports and even some of the top administration officials the national security strategy is not very deterrent. Deterrence features prominently in the document. Indeed, it argues one of the main purposes of U.S. military forces is to deter attacks and threats on the United States, its allies and friends. And indeed the strategy, for all the talk publicly about preemption, in addition is a fairly narrow goal for preemption. It discusses preemption in the context of terrorist groups and rogue states, not discussed in terms of Russia and China and no role is envisioned for it there.

Now, the argument for preempting terrorist groups is not I think controversial. Indeed, much of the whole purpose of law enforcement activities and intelligence operations is designed to disrupt terrorists before they can strike.

Now, the argument for preempting rogue states is a bit more controversial. It rests on the disputed claim that rogue state leaders are less deterrable, let's say, than the leaders of the Soviet Union were and we can argue this. Some of the evidence in Iraq and North Korea would suggest otherwise.

And the strategy also sort of skips over the problem endemic to any preemptive attack, and that is how you avoid a preemptive attack that actually brings about the danger you're worried about. Indeed, one of the problems with acting preemptively is that if you're worried about a rogue state handing weapons of mass destruction over to terrorist groups that by attacking them you could bring about what you most fear, or even in the chaos of the war, even if the rogue state leader doesn't hand those weapons out they can be stolen or bought by terrorist groups.

Leaving these arguments aside, I think one of the real shortcomings of the strategy is that it doesn't articulate a clear framework of thinking about when to preempt. What it does say is that the number of potential targets is small in number, that we will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats. Condoleezza Rice in a speech earlier this week in New York went a little bit further and talked about preemption in terms of existential threats to the United States when there is a grave danger, and she said that it was a tool that would be used seldom.

So I think one danger with preemption, I think one that sort of comes up in a lot of media reporting is that it's going to be employed too widely, it's not likely to operate in this case.

A more likely danger is that other countries will seize on the administration's rhetoric and use it as a cover for settling their own national security scores. You all have seen the Russians talking about how maybe Georgia poses a problem for preemption for them. The strategy recognizes this problem in its warning that states should not use

legitimate preemption for justification for aggression but until the administration can produce some clear set of criteria as to what distinguishes legitimate preemption from aggression I think it runs the risk of seeing its words used to justify ends it opposes.

Number three, on coalitions versus institutions, previous national security strategies have emphasized the role that institutions can play in furthering American interests, particularly by helping to forge an international consensus, to bring about common interests where previously only national interests existed.

The strategy itself is implicitly skeptical of international institutions. It does have a boilerplate patch that talks about the United States' commitment to these institutions, the United Nations, NATO and a few others, and it talks about the importance of strengthening these alliances in institutions, but gives absolutely no guide in terms of how it thinks that should be done and that question is sort of left open.

Instead, the strategy emphasizes the notion of forming ad hoc coalitions of the willing, and that is when we have a problem we'll go out there and work with like-minded people, that missions will define the coalition and not the other way around.

Now, this approach rests on two dubious assumptions. The first is that a coalition sufficient to handle the task will form in every instance. Now, this isn't probably a likely outcome in cases where America's military primacy can carry the day but in other areas a coalition of the willing may not be adequate to the task and is strictly the case in areas dealing with the spread of dangerous technologies, which, as Ivo pointed out, the national security strategy posits as one of the great threats to the United States. In this case it matters little if lots of nations follow America's lead in controlling dangerous technology if some countries choose not to.

The second dubious assumption that runs in the document in terms of dealing with international institutions is the idea that formal institutions contribute little to America interests beyond the narrow tasks it set out to create. I would suggest that the record of the Cold War suggests quite the otherwise, that institutions themselves can be very useful in producing consensus that didn't exist previously by providing a form of interaction among various groups, and in that sense a strategy by not talking about how to strengthen alliances or how to create new institutions misses an opportunity to create new mechanisms or forging a consensus that is acknowledged as important for achieving its goals.

Finally, on failed states, the strategy correctly argues that failed states present a strategic threat to America's interests. It's not just a moral imperative; it is a strategic imperative. Where the strategy falls down is producing concrete guidance on what to do about failed states, how do you stop states from failing, how do you rehabilitate ones that fail. This is not to say, and I want to emphasize this, it's not to say that the national security strategy doesn't talk about the importance of alleviating poverty in the developing world; it does. It talks about the millennium challenges now, as Ivo mentioned. It talks about shifting from loans to grants and a variety of other things.

These are all laudable policy programs. The administration deserves credit for them, and I think rightly done they can promote economic prosperity in much of the developing world. The problem is it's not clear how these policies will help save failed states where the difficulties go much deeper than a lack of capital investment. The administration's development strategy really is sort of a foreign policy version of tough love. What we're going to do is set tough standards. If you meet those standards, we're willing to help you.

The problem is failed states aren't likely to meet any of those criteria. They're not the kids from a disadvantaged neighborhood who are good performers and need an extra boost. They're the kids who are getting the Ds and are class problems. And in looking at this national security strategy it never really comes to grip with what is admittedly a very difficult problem. I don't want to suggest it's an easy problem to solve, but at the end of the day how you save countries that are falling apart, I think on that score the national security strategy comes up short.

I think we'll turn it over to Jim and he can talk a little bit about national security strategies at large and what their purpose is.



MR. JAMES B. STEINBERG: I have a whole bunch of them here if you'd all like to take a look. The requirement for an annual national security strategy report was established in the Goldwater Nichols Act in 1986. Goldwater Nichols was one of the most important efforts to try to begin to reshape the overall approach of military strategy into national strategy since the National Security Act of 1947. It strengthened the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and created a greater emphasis on jointness and in connection with that indicated the desire to see a more integrated effort to try to deal with bringing together not only the military but all the tools of American foreign policy and national security strategy into a common approach.

And the Congress was very explicit about what it wanted to see in these national security reports. The reports should describe the worldwide interests, goals and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States. It should describe the foreign policy, worldwide commitments and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and influence the national security strategy of the United States, the proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military and other elements of the national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph one, that is the national security, and the adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy, including an evaluation of the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States.

So it's really a very comprehensive document that's been called for and over the years presidents have responded to this requirement in different ways.

The report is important, because not only does it provide probably the one opportunity to discuss at length the overall national security strategy, since State of the Union addresses and inaugural addresses tend to give relatively short shrift to the external dimension of our policies, but it also provides templating, which all of the agencies of the federal government involved in national security and foreign policy turn to in terms of trying to devise strategies, both budgetary and policy strategies.

Various administrations have used this more or less successfully, but one of the things that I certainly learned from my time in government was that people in the government take these documents very seriously, even if the broader public doesn't. And it does become a very important guide for thinking about the trade-offs, the priorities and the choices that have to be made and it's very frequently the case, I think it comes as some surprise to those involved in the drafting, that they will come back and hear senior military officials or senior diplomatic officials say, "Well, I was just carrying out the strategy in your document."

So I think it's important not to simply see this as a one-off rhetorical exercise but really something that does have a big impact in driving decisions going down the road.

What I wanted to spend just a minute on today was to talk a little bit about some of the contrasts between this first national security strategy of the Bush administration and the last national security strategy of the Clinton administration. And I think that while you'll find obviously a number of elements in common, since there is a lot of continuity about basic principles of the need to defend the security of the American people, to promote prosperity and the like, that there are some significant differences of emphasis that can be seen in the two documents.

And I think the best place to start is with the first words of the last Clinton administration national security strategy where the president quotes Franklin Delano Roosevelt and says, "We have learned that we cannot live alone in peace. We have learned that our own well-being is depending on the well-being of other nations far away. We have learned to be citizens of the world and members of the human community."

And I think that emphasis really does sharply indicate a very different orientation both in terms of the assessment about the nature of the challenges facing the United States and in terms of the strategies that need to be pursued in achieving them.

The two watchwords in the Clinton strategy I think first as indicated by the Roosevelt quote is a sense of interdependence and second a broad focus on the impact of globalization in creating what the Clinton document calls both the opportunities and the risks that the United States faces.

The second big I think contrast between the two documents is the way in which threats are perceived. It's clear, as Jim and Ivo have indicated, that there is a dominant single threat in the Bush administration national security strategy, that is the marriage of

terrorism and tyrants, the sense that this is the overwhelming threat around which we need to organize our alliances, our military capability and our doctrine.

By contrast, the Clinton strategy sees a much more diverse set of threats. Indeed, it's very explicit. It identifies six characters of threats: regional or state-centric, transnational, which includes terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, foreign intelligence collection against the United States and environment and health threats. And so it sees terrorism as a significant threat but it sees it as part of a broader set of other issues.

I think the third difference, which comes out of this focus on interdependence in globalization, is the focus on international cooperation as a core element of a national security strategy. Indeed, the strategy defines our overall approach of the Clinton strategy as one of engagement and then focuses on the problem of international cooperation as one of strengthening and adapting formal relationships, creating new relationships and structures to deal with new challenges and to enhance the capability of other countries to share their challenges of leadership. And it also focuses on coordination of all the tools of American foreign policy and national security, military, diplomatic and economic.

So I think that in that sense there are some real differences, but it's also true that if you go back through these things you see that there is also a great deal that is common, and I want to just end by quoting a few sentences from the national security strategy of the last Clinton national security strategy about terrorism, and this is in the category of a special section on terrorism where the document says, "Whenever possible we use law enforcement and diplomatic tools to wage the fight against terrorism, but there have been and will be times when those tools are not enough. As long as terrorists continue to target American citizens we reserve the right to act in self defense by striking at their bases and those who sponsor, assist or actively support them."

So I think that as we look for differences and see differences of approach that it's also important to emphasize that the basic challenges do remain the same and the basic tools that are available to the United States and the basic techniques that are available are common and that while you will see differences of emphasis and these differences will tend to get magnified in the context of the national debate that there are some ongoing verities that any president in any administration faces and as you go back through now 16 years of national security strategy in many ways it's those common elements that stand out as much as the differences.

So questions? Right on the aisle here. If you could stand, say your name, please?

QUESTION: -- As you mentioned, the new national security strategy reflects the Bush administration's view of the new world order. As the most powerful country in the country, successful United States foreign policy depends on not only on domestic consensus, but also international consensus. But now, domestically, there are many serious debates about the new strategy. Some scholars say this reflects American

imperialist ambition, and internationally many countries criticize this new strategy as unilateralism.

Do you think this strategy is just a tactic against terrorists and will only have temporary influence on American foreign policy, or it's a real strategy that will have a long period of influence? And do you think you just have a consensus? Do you think domestic debate and international criticism is just temporary or it will change -- the international community and domestic [sic] will change their opinion?

Thank you.



MR. IVO DAALDER: What's really clear and what's to be commended in this document is the worldview that is presented that this administration has, which is basically that the world out there is full of lots of good people. The vast, vast majority is interested in becoming richer, becoming more free and basically to be left alone and doing what they need to do, but there is a threat out there of evil people, to put it in their terms, terrorists, two or three -- actually they only mention two -- rogue states, North Korea and Iraq, and that the purpose of American foreign policy has to be first and foremost to use the power that it has to defeat those threats, to eradicate evil, because then everything else can just continue on and we will help other people to become richer and freer. But unless you get rid of the main threat of terrorists, tyrants and technology you won't be able to concentrate on those other efforts.

It is as basic as that, that is that the threats that are identified are very limited and very specific. They relate to particular people with particular capabilities. And if you look, as Jim said, you compare that to the larger possibilities of challenge and threats that were identified prior to 9/11 or by different administrations, that's not mentioned. Global warming was mentioned in an aside as in order to be able to make a better world, once we have dealt with the threat, and they don't -- the administration clearly doesn't see dealing with that threat as either unilaterally or indeed as seeking hegemony. It is to create the condition in the international system, in the world at large for democracy, human rights and economic freedom to prosper. But if you don't deal with terrorists and tyrants you won't be able to do anything else. It's that clear hierarchy, the priority that you deal with terrorists and tyrants and weapons of mass destruction and then everything else is possible.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: Here in the middle.

NATHANIEL FOGG (Lieutenant, United States Navy): Nathaniel Fogg.

One thing I heard you mention, the tenet of freedom running in contrast with counter-terrorism, how do you see this new strategic vision playing out in Israel from a hard-line approach? I just sort of see the problem in Israel as one of an approach that we've taken that has not necessarily been as hard-line as this approach now looks when

you read it through, and I'm just wondering how you see this national security vision playing out in Israel.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: I would argue actually that the administration's policy towards the Israel-Palestinian conflict is actually a very clear indication of the way the strategy plays out, which is that the administration sees, as I think the government in Israel sees this as a challenge of terrorism that must be dealt as a no compromising, clear attack on the sources of terrorism and then, as Ivo says, once that's dealt with, other things become possible. Once the Palestinian authorities perform, once terrorism is renounced then we can move forward on an agenda to build a Palestinian state, to create economic opportunities, but that an uncompromising approach to terrorism implies that whatever tools are necessary to disrupt and destroy the infrastructure of terrorism should be the dominant force, and that until that's done these other questions, political questions, questions of final status need to be put aside.

And I think there has been a great debate and it's been one of the dividing points between the United States and Europe, for example, about whether this should be done sequentially or simultaneously, the Europeans arguing that, yes, terrorism has to be dealt with but unless you deal with the economic plight of the Palestinians, unless you deal with the political future that you're not going to likely be able to undermine or undercut the forces that are supporting terrorism while the Israeli government has said, "No, we have to go first and be uncompromising an use military force to root out the terrorists," and the administration has decided to back them.

Indeed, what was most striking was back last spring in April when the president initially called for the Israelis to withdraw from the towns that they had reoccupied following the heightened attacks in late and early spring, that the administration was criticized by some for having lost its moral compass in the war against terrorism and I think that attack really hit home and they pulled back and they said, "You're right, we really have to view this as through the terrorism lens."

MR. IVO DAALDER: Let me just add two points, because I actually think it also emphasizes two other parts of the strategy. One is a failure or an unwillingness to look at causes for why there is terrorism or anything else; it's there and it needs to be dealt with but why it's there is not in the strategy; you just defeat it.

Secondly, it also emphasized not only that terrorism is more important than democracy, but the way they think about promoting democracy, which is the just do it doctrine. Just do it, get rid of Arafat and everything will be fine. There isn't a strategy, there aren't any tools out there to really promote democracy, which is part of the strategy. We want to have a democratic Palestinian, not state, but entity in what some call the so-called occupied territories, but there's no real tool in the strategy to tell you how to get there.

So it gives you the sense that the freedom part is rhetorically interesting or is something that comes much later and then we'll deal with how to deal with it; sort of that

will happen as long as we get rid of the threats, which we don't define and the causes of which we don't define.

MR. JAMES LINDSAY: But just to piggyback off that last comment, it raises again sort of the first weakness I pointed to in the strategy, and that is the administration is very firm and very vocal in demanding democracy for Palestinians. It's not so clear, so candid, so upfront in demanding democracy in Saudi Arabia or in Egypt and other places in the Arab world, and again this feeds back into the gap between words and deed, which I think will come back to haunt the administration.

DON MOORE: Don Moore.

The question I have deals with what role now does Congress play in this since they basically called for the national security strategy. Will there be a debate in Congress on this or is it some document that just basically is used by the executive branch and essentially ignored by the Congressional people who actually called for it and ordered it?

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: That's a very good question, and it was clear at the time that Goldwater Nichols was enacted that it was supposed to be the predicate for a congressional consideration of the overall strategy. Unfortunately, Congress never followed out its own advice in terms of its own organization. It never created a forum or a platform within which that could be done, and so what happens if you have the very kind of integration that the national security strategy report calls for, that is bringing together all of its roles, military, diplomatic, economic, public diplomacy and the like, exist nowhere in the Congress so the report goes to the Armed Services Committee, which occasionally looks at some of the military issues there. It goes to the Foreign Relations Committee, which may look at some of the questions there. There are a variety of committees that have economic challenges. But there is no place for Congress to have that debate.

And I think it's been one of the biggest problems that we've had as we begin to think about reorienting national security in the post Cold War world is that there's been a tremendous amount of focus on reorganizing the executive branch -- we have the debate now on the Department of Homeland security, for example -- but there's been no serious effort by Congress itself to try to create the opportunities to have this kind of national debate. And so it has become ironically a tool of management and guidance within the executive branch but it has not fulfilled that role that the Congress initially saw for it in terms of its own deliberations.

CLAY RAMSAY (Program on International Policy Attitudes): I'm Clay Ramsay at Program on International Policy Attitudes.

I wonder if you would say whether there's something specific in the document about the role of bilateral relationships, because it seems that we've seen a real rise in emphasis on bilateral relationships and if you de-emphasize multilateral organizations in

your dealings with other countries then de facto bilateral relations become more important.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: Well, the document itself doesn't single out bilateral relations in a particular or explicit way, but clearly one of the things that flows from the administration's approach to foreign policy is what you point out, that bilateral relations become important in terms of talking about the promotion of democracy, the notion that we will speak candidly in our bilateral relations, and clearly when you're talking about coalitions of the willing you're talking about going on in a sort of retail fashion bringing people on board and that's clearly part of it.

And I think the administration would argue, again as Ivo pointed out, that September 11th greatly expanded the pool of possible partners on issues, clearly with regards to Russia and to China, and I think in terms of that diagnosis it may suffer from a bit of over optimism, and I would imagine that if the previous administrations had taken the attitude towards Russia and more so China that this document does, that the lead story would have not been preemption but rather one of being far too optimistic about China and naïve about the rising Chinese threat.

But I think it's interesting -- this isn't directly a bilateral point, but that in trying to reflect what these new coalitions and these new relationships are about the administration and Condi in her most recent speech talked about a coalition of order versus chaos. And it's a very different formulation than this articulation of a balance of power in favor of freedom and it's unclear exactly sort of what the side of order is. Order versus chaos may have a positive ring of trying to deal with the uncertainties and the threats that the world faces but order also can have the element of control. And the question then becomes how do they trade those balances. And it's only by looking at a case-by-case way of building these coalitions, going through the bilateral relations, that you can say well here are the people who are on the side of order, because otherwise they have very little in common with each other.

MR. JAMES LINDSAY: Well, then and just to emphasize that, when you're talking about providing order what you're talking about is providing stability and there's no guarantee that stability means justice, and I think that's one of the fundamental problems and it's a very real tension of a doctrine you can grapple with.

QUESTION: Could you please shed some light on what the strategy says about nuclear weapons and specifically I think two elements of that? And I haven't read it so I'm asking for your enlightenment.

One, how do they handle the apparent contradiction between the U.S. renouncing the Comprehensive Test Ban, paying budgets, money to resume testing eventually or at some point and asking other countries to renounce weapons, and two, the role of the NPT? In other words, how significant is a multilateral regime in keeping other countries from getting it versus going after individual potential acquirers of weapons?

MR. IVO DAALDER: What's interesting is the nuclear weapons are mentioned at least at one and perhaps at two, but at one point it is nuclear weapons are mentioned as evidence of the changing relationship between the United States and Russia, the fact that we're going down by two-thirds demonstrates that we have a new relationship, and I think that's about it. Then it's weapons of mass destruction.

And what's interesting is weapons of mass destruction and the threat of proliferation is a problem only in the context of rogue states. You can read this document as saying there's not a problem in the context of other states, because indeed arms control, which has one single mention, not CTBT, not nonproliferation treaty, not chemical or biological weapons conventions, none of which are mentioned, but arms control in the single mention is used as part of your prevention strategy to deal with rogue states and that's it.

So it is a very constricted view of the role of nuclear weapons and the danger that nuclear weapons represent, because one way to read this is that when Germany gets nuclear weapons or Japan gets nuclear weapons, that's not a problem because they're not - - maybe Germany these days is but at least Japan is not run by tyrants, at least in this administration's view.

So again in contrast to, and Jim is going through to looking at previous strategies, I mean this is a big thing. It's gone. Weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons are a problem within the context of rogue states. They are not necessarily a problem in any other context.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: Just go give some flavor, the word arms control, as Ivo points out, is mentioned once and no specific arms control agreements are mentioned at all that I'm aware of. By contrast, there were four and a half full pages, double columns, in the last Clinton strategy on a section called arms control and nonproliferation, which I think gives you a sense.

It's interesting on the U.S. side as well that there's very little discussion of what the Bush administration's view of the role of our nuclear weapons are. It's not a long one. There are only two and a half paragraphs in the last Clinton one, but it does talk about what the force posture ought to be and what the role of nuclear weapons are, and I don't think -- we'd have to go back and check, but I don't think there's any discussion of nuclear doctrines on our side at all in the report.

QUESTION: (Name inaudible) from the Embassy of China.

And I think the economic strategy is part of Bush's national security strategy and the main thing is free trade and an open market. I wonder are there any differences between Bush's economic strategy and the Clinton administration's economic strategy? Thank you.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: I don't think there are huge differences in the document about this. I think that we've had some discussion about the difference on assistance and a greater emphasis on conditionality and worries about economic assistance not going to the right place. I think there is less focus in the Bush strategy on the role of the international financial institutions and their sort of centrality as part of the process, and I think we've seen that reflected in the ambivalence that the administration has had about the international financial institutions and particularly their role in dealing with failing economies.

But I think there's a general proximity, because both reports were largely free-trade oriented and market opening orienting, have a great deal of similarity.

QUESTION: (Off mike) -- the language is dealing with terrorists and tyrants, and as you said today, defeating terrorism or eradicating terrorism. That sets the bar pretty high and I was wondering if you could talk about the implications of that in terms of pushing other issues off the domestic agenda or foreign policy agenda and in terms of maybe setting the administration up for failure if eradicating or dealing with terrorism isn't as easy as the policy makes it seem.

MR. JAMES LINDSAY: Well, I think that one has to keep in mind that national security strategy documents are also political documents and I can't imagine any administration coming out with a national security strategy that says we're going to hold terrorists at bay and we'll try to go one for two.

So I think in some sense the nature of the American political system and our own political rhetoric focuses on eliminating, stopping, denying and I think clearly given this administration's worldview that really comes to the forefront.

That however need not disable you from recognizing tradeoffs. It's not as if because you have to talk about it in a certain way you can't recognize complications and limitations. In this respect, what's remarkable is to compare the national security strategy document with Condoleezza Rice's earlier this week in New York because it's much more nuanced, it's much less, dare I say, simplistic than the national security strategy document tends to be in places. And I think obviously for any administration rhetoric is an important tool with which you can mobilize people, send directions to your subordinates and it's also very important not to get trapped in your own rhetoric to let it obscure the complexities.

And I think we should point out that the risks in this document is that it tends to simplify many issues, and I think to be fair to the administration in many practical applications it seems to be aware that the world is not quite as cut and dry as the document might describe.

But it does raise the problem I think that Jim points out that the extent to which this is a document that drives people down the ladder in the administration the clear

inability to acknowledge that tradeoffs exist encourages people not to notice that tradeoffs exist.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: I also think that you raise a good point about the problem of sort of seeing terrorism as a homogeneous phenomenon and that if you define counter-terrorism as a strategy, without seeing differentiations among the circumstances under which terrorism arises, that you end up having sort of a one size fits all answer to problems, which are very different, and I think that's broadly been a problem with the administration's counter-terrorism strategy. We've seen this in the question, the earlier question about the way in which the Israel-Palestinian conflict has played out, and it is clear that everyone condemns terrorism, nobody is in favor of it, there are debates about whether there are differences between the liberation strategies, but I think it would be possible to get certainly in the United States a broad consensus around the proposition that terrorism under any set of circumstances is indefensible, but that doesn't tell you much about the strategy.

And these are documents about strategy and if you say that the goal is to eradicate terrorism does that mean that we are committed as a national strategy to deal with the Basque Separatists? Does it mean, although there are no promising developments in Sri Lanka, do we have a national security strategy to eliminate the LCTE and would we really be serious about that if that were our policy? And there isn't any reflection of those differentiations in the document.

LORETTA BONDI (Fund for Peace): Loretta Bondi, Fund for Peace.

As the doctrine, the strategy was being formulated and variously articulated by President Bush and others, I've seen really different views that came to the public, came known to the public and were expressed by different administration officials.

Do you think that the strategy as it currently stands reflect a balance of these seemingly different wills within the administration?

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: You know, it's always difficult to sort of play the Washington game to try to peer behind the curtain and know what's going on in the administration. There's no doubt that in any administration the process of coming to these documents, different perspectives are brought to bear and there is this challenge of trying to meld it into a coherent whole while still recognizing that there are differences in emphasis, if not a fundamental difference among different agencies and different actors.

I think one of the great challenges, and I give the administration some credit for that, is to try to prevent these from becoming laundry lists in which every single issue and everybody's concern finds their way into the document. There is an inherent bureaucratic tendency to make these, well, if you throw everything in then nobody can accuse you of leaving anything out, and I think that they were right not to seek to do a laundry list.

I think though that the overall thrust reflects a broad thrust that the administration shares, but you can feel the difference in different sections of the report that one or more agencies had a greater influence in the shaping of the language. And so in the discussion of military force, for example, and this discussion about having a capability so disproportionately greater than the rest of the world, so as to dissuade others from even contemplating a buildup, that has a very strong ring of the leadership of the Pentagon and their view about the role of the United States. We're all very familiar with the discussions back during the first Bush administration when then Undersecretary Wolfowitz was beginning to articulate a doctrine about preventing the appearance of a competing hegemony or anyone who could challenge the United States. So I think you can see strong influences there.

But I do think that there is a fair degree of coherence, and I think that this probably reflects the strong hand that the National Security Advisor played in pulling this together, so that the document it does hang together, I mean it's not what we think are the strengths or shortcomings. I think its basic sort of sense of bringing together the different agencies and different players in the administration, it's pretty clear that there is that strong sense of where their center of gravity is.

QUESTION: In the context of institutions versus coalitions, where is NATO? Is it an institution, a coalition, or neither or them and just simply irrelevant?

MR. JAMES LINDSAY: Well, the national strategy says quite clearly that the United States has a commitment to lapsing international institutions and one it names is the United Nations and another is NATO. And elsewhere in the document it calls --

MR. IVO DAALDER: It also mentions the Organization for American States as one of those lapsing institutions.

MR. JAMES LINDSAY: Oh, you can read into that whatever you wish to read into that, but it clearly does talk about the importance of NATO. It also talks about the importance of strengthening alliances and then the question becomes one of what does that mean and on that score the strategy doesn't provide much guidance, but clearly we'd like to see other members of NATO contribute more but in terms of any particular concrete suggestions for NATO I think it's slim pickings.

MR. IVO DAALDER: It goes a little further than that. It actually identifies a single mission for NATO, which is to deal with terrorists, tyrants and technology, and that the mission that emerged out of the 1990s of creating a Europe whole, free and at peace, as phrased by the way that doesn't appear in this document, Bush's phrase in his Warsaw speech last June, 2001, isn't there. It does talk about expansion as important, but when it talks about NATO it talks about capabilities to deal with threats outside of Europe, and it is very clear that, I mean, if you want to go back to the previous comments, if you want to see where the Defense Department's influence came in, it's on those kinds of issues. It is you are useful to the extent that you are able to deal with this

particular mission, and if you don't have the capabilities, are not willing to do it, then you are no more longer useful.

And the larger issue of NATO, in fact, providing a stable environment in Europe in the way that it has done for not only 52 years as an organization but particularly in the last 10, 12 years at the end of World War II, the central aspect of bipartisan American foreign policy is not in this document.

ANDREW LOOMIS (Search for Common Ground): Thanks. Andrew Loomis, Search for Common Ground.

I wonder if you could comment briefly on whether we have any indication whether following this strategy will, in fact, be effective, specifically case studies in which elements of the strategy have been exercised and exceeded, overthrowing institutions, possibly preemption, targeted assistance or is this just an administration hunch?

MR. IVO DAALDER: I mean, I think, one, we are in the social science experiment, if you want, right now on Iraq because this strategy is, in fact, in many ways written specifically for this one case in all its elements, in the element of defending the threat, defending the peace, in terms of creating an international coalition to deal with Iraq and in terms of what happens afterwards, so we'll see.

But there is the other experiment, which we had is in Afghanistan where indeed it wasn't preemption, it was retaliation but it was also preemption in order to make -- it was also part of the doctrine to go after the states that harbor terrorists. There was an ultimatum placed on the Taliban, which was not fulfilled, and military power eradicated that regime and indeed a terrorist base of operation and we can debate the effectiveness of this; I'd argue quite effective in the first case, still lots to be done to see whether it works in the second, third and fourth case and we'll see where it ends up.

But the larger point is that there is a confidence in the American power here and a belief, a strong belief that an exercising of American power creates new realities that are favorable to the United States. I think one of the salutary things we have learned in the last 18 months is there is some truth and, in fact, there is quite a large degree of truth to that, but whether that is in and of itself sufficient, as the strategy really seems to imply, is a debatable point but the notion that one uses power in a way that this administration uses power has positive benefits I think in Afghanistan was proven, and we may see what happens in Iraq, and in that may prove effective there as well.

MR. JAMES STEINBERG: And I think that the strategies inevitably have a tendency to fight the last war, to remedy the last deficiency, and this strategy is clearly driven by a view by this administration of what it viewed as the deficiencies in the previous administration. And so the evidence I think they would cite is to say here are the problems that we encountered from the way the last administration put their strategy

and here's how we're going to cure them. And there is an argument that can be made as to why that's the case.

The problem is that it's much harder to say, well here are the successes of the past that we're going to continue and it's also even harder yet to say here are the problems in the future, which we haven't contemplated yet but we need to prepare ourselves for that, and I think that that's the biggest, it's always the biggest problem with strategies is to try to anticipate the challenges of the future, which is not to say that we don't have to deal with the problems of now, but this is on the military side, Secretary Rumsfeld I think appropriately talks about trying to think about warfare in the future not to focus on the current enemy but to think about capabilities in the future.

I think what's in some ways lacking about the overall document is to take that insight, which I think is one of the most important ones the administration has had, and adapt it to the broader national security strategy, which is to say what is it more broadly that we're going to be facing going forward and how do we position ourselves, and I think the concern that at least the three of us have had is that part of the things they are doing now to deal with this very real immediate threat will not position us well to deal with these challenges we're going to have to face in the future, because we will have lost support of others, because we will not have nurtured institutions that will put us in a position to have support and capabilities to deal with as yet submerged threats in which we will then need to find others to work with us.

Thank you, all.

(Applause.)

[END OF EVENT.]