

National Security Strategy: A Rhetorical Analysis

The interim NSS¹ of the Biden administration aims to convey the president's vision for how USA will engage with the world under his leadership, which will help America navigate this future.

The issuance of the interim NSS also aids all US government departments and agencies in aligning their actions and goals to work collectively towards the vision that the POTUS has laid for the nation. The interim also mentions the threats US faces today and the threats it may face soon. The most significant danger is the rise of other global players who follow different ideologies and nurture varied perspectives - increasing the number of institutions and individuals who question the effectiveness and abilities of a democracy. Therefore, the Biden administration's NSS has prioritized demonstrating that democracies can still provide for their people, along with the ever-important emphasis on diplomacy over military usage.

With this document, the Biden-Harris administration is trying to portray themselves as the "good guys" who will guide the common American folk towards a better future by "renewing our own enduring sources of national strength" and "advancing American interests and upholding our universal values," which translates to "something needs to be changed" and that "the American interests are universal and therefore should be openly accepted." Simultaneously, the interim NSS is trying to justify that USA is so much more than just possessing the most powerful military in the world. Instead, it is more about "our diversity, vibrant economy, dynamic civil

¹ National security strategy. Accessed July 22, 2024.
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

society and innovative technological base, enduring democratic values, broad and deep network of partnerships and alliances.”

Having read the interim NSS for 2021 and listened to Prof. Kate Floros’ podcast “The Politics Classroom²,” lines like: “Diplomacy is back. Alliances are back. **But we are not looking back.**”³ make me stand in support of Dr. Lawrence Brown’s perspective. That is, “America is a nation which is not interested in dealing with its past and does not accept that the past leads to the present.” Furthermore, the mention of prioritizing partnerships and alliances is ironic, considering Biden’s image on the international stage, who, for some people, comes across as a weak leader. For instance, I firmly believe that a “stronger” POTUS (Trump maybe) would have kept Russia in check by forcing Turkey not to VETO Sweden and Finland’s bid to join NATO after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, amongst other viable options. The same logic applies to the China-Taiwan conflict; The PLA (People’s Liberation Army) had not been this aggressive regarding Taiwan during any previous POTUS tenure. As a result, even if US commits to making ties with India “among the closest on Earth⁴” under the leadership of Biden, I will not value his words as much. In my opinion, USA will likely keep its mouth shut and not provide any assistance to India in case of a large-scale armed conflict between India and China.

² Floros, Kate. “Making Politics Understandable: The Politics Classroom.” The Politics Classroom. Accessed July 22, 2024. <https://www.thepoliticsclassroom.org/>.

³ Floros, Kate. “Episode: The US Affirmatively Needs to Take Action.” The Politics Classroom. Accessed July 22, 2024. <https://www.thepoliticsclassroom.org/episodes/episode/1d0b123c/202206-the-us-affirmatively-needs-to-take-action>.

⁴ Pti. “Committed to Making India-U.S. Ties among Closest on Earth: Biden Tells Modi.” The Hindu, May 24, 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/committed-to-making-india-us-ties-among-closest-on-earth-biden-tells-modi/article65456141.ece>.

The superpower status of US has resulted in the American administration assuming the role of global police, which is complemented by the American mindset that America's problems are the world's problems, but not vice-versa. This mindset⁵ is similar to that of European powers(UK, France, Germany), as pointed out by Dr. S Jaishankar(Minister of External Affairs of India). The Biden NSS defends these cliché traits of USA: "America's interests at home are strengthened by improving lives globally," "Leading the world is not an investment we make to feel good about ourselves," "We will also pursue new arms control arrangements." and "Our world is at an inflection point. Global dynamics have shifted. New crises demand our attention."

In conclusion, the Biden interim NSS lays a vision for USA, to align themselves with, under his leadership. His vision has kept in mind the shift in global dynamics, hinting towards the beginning of a multi-polar world, where multiple superpowers will exist. Naturally, some of these powers share some interests while others do not, resulting in divisions/tension between them on various bases, whether religion or ideology. Some of these divisions have already taken shape; for example, the communist nations of Russia and China are questioning the capabilities of democracies and, indirectly, that of the oldest one, which also happens to be the most powerful one out of the bunch.

Therefore, through this interim NSS, Biden is indicating the importance of sustaining USA's economy to fend off those who question democracy and USA, to which he gives paramount priority. He believes sustaining the economy is the best way to tackle all the enlisted problems. He also incorporates "**No nation is better positioned to navigate this future than America**" to enhance the persuasive tone of this document. Nevertheless, I share a different perspective,

⁵ "Europe Has to Grow out of Mindset That Europe's Problems Are World's Problems: EAM." YouTube, June 4, 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Av1wcg7h_Tw.

considering that India has surpassed her colonizer (whose rule lasted for approximately 250 years)economically, militarily, and in various other fields within 75 years of independence. This makes me believe that the advantage lies with the nations of India and even China, who can analyze the decisions that were made by US and USSR(the only actual modern superpowers) and use these to lay the groundwork for the future, which will most probably be the Asian century.

Persuasiveness might be lessened by the administration trying to question their nation's capabilities (to sustain this economy) and their ideology. This interim NSS is molded in such a way that the typical American reader is forced to believe that all of this is in the interest of their people and that it perfectly aligns with the vision/values of the common folk. Furthermore, the document sheds light on the glorious image of USA in every international institution and the qualities of each American, which have made it possible for US to maintain its superpower status for over half a century. That is why I believe the Biden administration has successfully created a persuasive interim NSS, which will help guide this great nation into the future.

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