

**CHINESE ANALYSTS DISSECT THE US
NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 2010**

ZHANG Yongjin

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Executive Summary

1. On 27 May 2010, the White House released its National Security Strategy (NSS) 2010, articulating the Obama administration's new strategic vision of US national security.
2. Chinese analysts are quick to note that the NSS 2010 shows a significant departure from the central tenet of the Bush Doctrine, namely, the pre-emptive war and a notable shift back to the more traditional principle of the use of force as a last resort.
3. The NSS confirms that the Obama administration can and will no longer pursue the go-it-alone unilateralism in its security strategy and global policy characterized by the Bush administration.
4. The limits and overextension of the American power have compelled the United States to go beyond its traditional allies to actively seek meaningful engagement with 'new and emerging powers' as partners for collective action in meeting global challenges.
5. The NSS 2010 has defined threats (and hazards) to American security much more broadly, which now include climate change, large-scale cyber attacks, natural disasters, along with weapons of mass destruction and violent extremism both at home and abroad.
6. The emerging prosperity-security nexus makes balanced and sustained economic growth, strengthening education and human capital and enhancing science, technology and innovation, and even reducing the federal deficit, part of an integral security strategy of the United States.
7. China is mentioned ten times in the NSS 2010. Chinese analysts welcome the affirmation that the Obama administration will 'continue to pursue a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship with China'.

8. China is identified as one of ‘emerging and new powers’ and one of ‘other 21st century centers of influence’ with shared responsibilities in shaping the future global order.
9. Beijing is, however, wary of falling into any traps of American-defined responsibility. There is palpable skepticism about the US call for China to take on ‘a responsible leadership role’ in any US-led collective action.
10. Beijing’s reaction to the statements on the Taiwan issue and the human rights issue in the NSS 2010 is relatively muted.
11. As the NSS 2010 defines the proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional states as one of the top national security priorities for the US, Chinese policies towards North Korea and Iran will continue to be contested by the United States.
12. Beijing will have to respond creatively to the US call for it to take on ‘a more responsible leadership role’ in global affairs. There will be stress tests of one key foreign policy principle of Beijing, i.e. ‘hiding one’s capacities and biding one’s time’ (韬光养晦).

CHINESE ANALYSTS DISSECT THE US NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY 2010

ZHANG Yongjin*

The White House and National Security Strategy 2010

- 1.1 On 27 May, just two days after the Second China-US Strategic and Economic Dialogue was concluded in Beijing,¹ the White House released its National Security Strategy (NSS) 2010.
- 1.2 This 52-page document² is divided into four sections: *Overview of National Security Strategy*, *Strategic Approach*, *Advancing Our Interests*, and *Conclusion*. Released 16 months after the inauguration of Obama as the US President, it is the most comprehensive and arguably most important strategic and foreign policy statement of the Obama administration.
- 1.3 Under a 1986 law, US presidents are required to present to the Congress an annual statement of national security strategy.³ This is the first one for the Obama administration. Such congressionally mandated document is, however, ‘not a blueprint for action but a means to convey the president’s principles and priorities’.⁴

* Zhang Yongjin is a Visiting Research Professor at the East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore. He wishes to thank Professor Zheng Yongnian for his useful comments on an earlier draft of this brief.

¹ See Zhu Zhiqun and Courtney Fu Rong, ‘U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, 2010’, *EAI Background Brief* No. 532.

² This excludes three pages penned by President Obama as a preface to this document.

³ No US president, however, seems to have strictly adhered to this. The Bush administration, for example, has notably released only two National Security Strategy papers in 2002 and 2006 respectively.

⁴ Samuel R. Berger, ‘Obama’s National Security Strategy: A little George Bush, lots of Bill Clinton’, *The Washington Post*, 30 May 2010. Samuel Berger was the National Security Advisor to President Bill Clinton from 1997 to 2001.

- 1.4 It is intended as a framework for strategy documents to be produced by other government departments, including the Pentagon's national defense strategy.
- 1.5 The NSS 2010 gives President Obama an opportunity to articulate his strategic vision of the American future and to put his imprint on American strategic and foreign policy. In the preface to this National Security Strategy paper, Obama envisages 'a world in which America is stronger, more secure, and able to overcome our challenges while appealing to the aspirations of people around the world'.
- 1.6 To achieve this goal, he urges the United States to 'pursue a strategy of national renewal and global leadership—a strategy that rebuilds the foundation of American strength and influence'.⁵
- 1.7 On the same day when the NSS 2010 was released, Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of State, still jet-lagged from her trip to China and Asia, joined an impressive gathering of 'many old friends and important thinkers and talkers about American foreign policy' as well as 'members of the diplomatic community' at the Brookings Institution in the Washington D.C. and made a number of interpretive remarks about the NSS 2010.
- 1.8 The NSS 2010, according to Hillary Clinton, 'is about strengthening and applying American leadership to advance our national interests and to solve shared problems. We do this against the backdrop of a changed and always changing global landscape and a difficult inheritance: two wars, a struggling economy, reduced credibility abroad, international institutions buckling under the weight of systemic changes, and so much more'.⁶

⁵ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. i.

⁶ Hillary Rodham Clinton, 'Remarks on the Obama Administration's National Security Strategy', The Brookings Institution, Washington D. C., 27 May 2010, at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/05/142312.htm>.

Changes and Continuities

- 2.1 As Beijing sees a significant stake in fostering a close Sino-American cooperation on regional and global issues, the importance of this document for Beijing's repositioning of its regional and global policies has not been lost on the analysts in China. They are quick to offer their interpretations and have endeavored to tease out the implications of the new US national security strategy for China.
- 2.2 When Chinese analysts dissect (解读) the document, they see both changes and continuities in the national security strategy of the United States under the Obama administration.
- 2.3 In the first instance, it is widely noted that the NSS 2010 shows a significant departure from the central tenet of the Bush Doctrine, namely, the pre-emptive war. Without explicit reference to its deviation, the NSS 2010 states: 'while the use of force is sometimes necessary, we will exhaust other options before war whenever we can, and carefully weigh the costs and risks of action against the costs and risks of inaction'.⁷
- 2.4 This is a shift back to the traditional principle of the use of force as a last resort. Some analysts in Beijing have ascribed such a shift to the military setbacks and failures in the practice of the Bush Doctrine in both Afghanistan and Iraq and the overstretching of the US hegemonic power and its global commitment.⁸
- 2.5 Many have also noted a candid admission by Obama that 'The burden of a young century cannot fall on America's shoulders only', and that 'no one

⁷ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 22.

⁸ See for example, Zhang Xiaotian, 'jiedu 2010 nian meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao' (A Scrutiny of the National Security Strategy of the United States), at <http://bbs.qstheory.cn/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=27518>; Wen Xian, 'meiguo guojia anquan xinzhuanlue chulu' (The New National Security Strategy of the United States Unveiled) *Renmin Ribao*, 29 May 2010; and Ran Wei, 'xianshi poshi meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao biandiao' (Realities in Global Politics Forced the Changing Tone of the National Security Strategy of the United States) at <http://world.people.com.cn/GB/11723202.html>.

nation can meet the challenges of the 21st century on its own, nor dictate its terms to the world'.⁹

2.6 For analysts in Beijing, this means that recognizing the limits of the American power, the Obama administration can and will no longer pursue the go-it-alone unilateralism in its security strategy and global policy characterized by the Bush administration.¹⁰

2.7 This is, however, not necessarily the end of American unilateralism. It is rather a limited departure from the Bush unilateralism. One analyst asserts that 'since President John Quincy, most American presidents have reserved (and used) the rights of pre-emptive strikes'.¹¹ It is, as Samuel Berger puts it, more a return to the Clinton principle of 'together when possible, alone when necessary'.¹²

2.8 The willingness of the Obama administration to engage in international cooperation and collective action has not escaped the notice of Chinese analysts. The NSS 2010 concedes that the United States 'must face the world as it is' and recognizes that 'power, in an interconnected world, is no longer a zero sum game'.¹³

2.9 It is the limits and the overextension of the American power, they argue, that have compelled the United States to go beyond its traditional allies to actively

⁹ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. ii and p. 40.

¹⁰ Yao Kemin, 'aobama: tiaozheng anquan zhanlue' (Obama Adjusts the US National Security Strategy) at <http://mil.sinoth.com/Doc/article/2010/5/30/server/1000061010.htm>; and 'aobama ban meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao shici tidao zhongguo' (China Is Noted Ten Times in Obama's National Security Strategy of the United States) at <http://news.cntv.cn/world/20100529/100474.shtml>.

¹¹ Liu Yongtao, 'jiedu meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao: duobian de yuyan, bubian de zhanlue' (An Analytical Reading of the National Security Strategy of the United States: Changing Rhetoric, not Strategy) *Wenhui Daily*, 4 June 2010. In fact, NSS maintains that the United States 'must reserve the right to act unilaterally if necessary to defend our nation and our interests'. The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 22.

¹² Samuel R. Berger, 'Obama's National Security Strategy: A little George Bush, lots of Bill Clinton', *The Washington Post*, 30 May 2010.

¹³ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 1 and p. 3.

seek meaningful engagement with ‘new and emerging powers’ (with specific reference to China) as partners for collective action in meeting global challenges.¹⁴

- 2.10 This policy is appealing to China. Chinese analysts are ambivalent, though, about the US emphasis on shared responsibilities and cautious about the US-defined/US-led multilateralism.¹⁵
- 2.11 Further, the NSS 2010 has defined threats (and hazards) to American security much more broadly, which now include climate change, large-scale cyber attacks, natural disasters, along with weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and violent extremism, both at home and abroad.
- 2.12 Prosperity has thus become an important security asset. This prosperity-security nexus, i.e. ‘building foundation at home’, calls for maintaining balanced and sustained economic growth, strengthening education and human capital and enhancing science, technology and innovation, and even reducing the federal deficit.¹⁶
- 2.13 Finally, the NSS has notably ditched the rhetoric of ‘war on terror’ that characterized the Bush era.
- 2.14 What has not changed, most Chinese analysts believe, is that the NSS 2010 continues to seek the strategic goal of maintaining American hegemony in the 21st century as a fundamental American interest. It continues to envisage a global order that is dominated, if not solely defined, by the United States.

¹⁴ ‘Wang Baofu: aobama xin guojia anquan zhanlue neng ban meiguo zouchu nitan?’ (Can Obama’s New National Security Strategy Get the United States out of the Quagmire?: An Interview with Wang Baofu) at http://www.cnr.cn/junshi/jmhd/gfsk/zxst/201005/t20100525_506480427.html.

¹⁵ ‘Beijing Tipped to Stay Cautious on Obama Doctrine’, *South China Morning Post*, 29 May 2010.

¹⁶ Zhang Xiaotian, ‘jiedu 2010 nian meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao’ (A Scrutiny of the National Security Strategy of the United States), at <http://bbs.qstheory.cn/bbs/viewthread.php?tid=27518>; and ‘baigong fabiao “aobama zhuyi” xuanyan’ (The White House Releases the Declaration of the Obama Doctrine) *Nanfang Daily*, 29 May 2010.

China

- 3.1 What does the changing US security strategy say about China? Where does the Obama administration place China in America's efforts to renew its global leadership? These are questions that Chinese analysts seek answers to in their close scrutiny of the NSS, which is said to have mentioned China in ten places.¹⁷
- 3.2 Chinese analysts welcome the affirmation that the Obama administration will 'continue to pursue a positive, constructive, and comprehensive relationship with China' and that it sees the newly established Strategic and Economic Dialogue as an effective mechanism to 'address a broad range of issues' and to 'reduce mistrust' between the two militaries.¹⁸
- 3.3 The inclusion of China as one of the 'emerging and new powers' and one of the 'other 21st century centers of influence', which include also all BRIC countries, seems to come close to confirming a structure of the emerging global order as 'one superpower and numerous great powers' (一超多强) long envisaged by Chinese analysts. In Hillary Clinton's words, 'We see a world in which great power is exercised by primarily one nation, but there are many other existing and emerging powers'.¹⁹
- 3.4 There is palpable skepticism to the US call for China to take on 'a responsible leadership role to work with the US and the international community' to deal with global issues ranging from economic recovery, climate change and non-proliferation. This is perhaps not only because of China's rejection of the idea

¹⁷ 'meiguo guoan baogao shici tidao zhongguo: zhuanjia jiedu' (The National Security Strategy of the United States Mentions China Ten Times: Comments by Experts), at http://club.china.com/data/thread/2714957/2713/52/36/3_1.html; 'aobama ban meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao shici tidao zhongguo' (China Is Noted Ten Times in Obama's National Security Strategy of the United States at <http://news.cntv.cn/world/20100529/100474.shtml>).

¹⁸ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 43.

¹⁹ Hillary Rodham Clinton, 'Remarks on the Obama Administration's National Security Strategy', The Brookings Institution, Washington D. C., 27 May 2010.

of G2, but also because it is wary of falling into any traps of American-defined responsibility.

- 3.5 Chinese analysts are miffed that the NSS states that the United States ‘will monitor China’s military modernization program and prepare accordingly to ensure that U.S. interests and allies, regionally and globally, are not negatively affected’. This is interpreted as a continued ‘hedging’ strategy against China.²⁰
- 3.6 There is at the same time rather muted reaction to the statement in the NSS on the Taiwan question, which only says that the United States ‘will encourage continued reduction in tension between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan.’²¹
- 3.7 This is particularly noteworthy, as the NSS 2002 made explicit commitment to the self-defense of Taiwan. The statement in the NSS 2006 that ‘China and Taiwan must also resolve their differences peacefully, without coercion and without unilateral action by either China or Taiwan’ also evoked strong reactions from China.²²
- 3.8 Similarly, there is muted reaction to the statement in the NSS that the United States ‘will be candid on our human rights concerns’ in China, though some

²⁰ See ‘meiguo guoan baogao shici tidao zhongguo: zhuanjia jiedu’ (The National Security Strategy of the United States Mentions China Ten Times: Comments by Experts), at http://club.china.com/data/thread/2714957/2713/52/36/3_1.html; and ‘aobama ban meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao shici tidao zhongguo’ (China Is Noted Ten Times in Obama’s National Security Strategy of the United States at <http://news.cntv.cn/world/20100529/100474.shtml>).

²¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, May 2010, p. 43.

²² Liu Endong, ‘xinban meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao: xin zai hechu?’ (What is new of the National Security Strategy of the United States (2006)?’ at <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/41038/4311912.html>. For China’s official reaction, see ‘waijiaobu fayanren Qin Gang jiu meiguo zhengfu guojia anquan zhanlue baogao shehua renrong da jizhe wen’ (Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang’s answers to the China question Related to the 2006 National Security Strategy of the United States at a Press Conference), 20 March 2006 at <http://www.chinaconsulatesf.org/chn/xw/fyrth/t241289.htm>.

analysts regard this as the United States' intention to continue 'lecturing China on human rights issues' (对中国的人权问题指手画脚).²³

An Emerging Obama Doctrine?

- 4.1 If Chinese analysts are relatively confident that the NSS 2010 shows some clear and significant departures from the Bush Doctrine, they are less sure about whether the NSS 2010 articulates a set of coherent ideas that heralds the emergence of the long anticipated 'Obama Doctrine' in the US security strategy.
- 4.2 Well before becoming the American president, then Senator Barack Obama had already written in *Foreign Affairs* on 'Renewing American Leadership'.²⁴ Since his inauguration as President, Chinese analysts have observed, that Obama and his administration have articulated a number of ideas on security strategy, which are 'not always coherent, and often tentative and sometimes even contradictory'.²⁵
- 4.3 Even if a set of coherent ideas has been articulated in the NSS 2010, Chinese analysts find it difficult to summarize succinctly its central tenets. There are certainly no such catch-phrases as 'war on terror' or 'pre-emptive strikes' to resort to.²⁶
- 4.4 Very few Chinese analysts seem to have picked up what Hillary Clinton calls the 'three Ds', namely, defense, development and diplomacy as a new starting

²³ 'meiguo guoan baogao shici tidao zhongguo: zhuanjia jiedu' (The National Security Strategy of the United States Mentions China Ten Times: Comments by Experts), at http://club.china.com/data/thread/2714957/2713/52/36/3_1.html; and 'aobama ban meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue baogao shici tidao zhongguo' (China Is Noted Ten Times in Obama's National Security Strategy of the United States at <http://news.cntv.cn/world/20100529/100474.shtml>).

²⁴ Barack Obama, 'Renewing American Leadership', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2007.

²⁵ Pang Zhongying, 'aobama zhuyi haiyou duoyuan' (Whither the Obama Doctrine?), *China Report*, No. 2, 2009, at http://new.21ccom.net/articles/qqsww/qyyj/article_201001201376.html.

²⁶ 'jiji yu daguo hudong, aobama zhuyi kaishi jue' (Actively Promoting Collective Action Among Great Powers: The Arrival of the Obama Doctrine) at http://news.xinhuanet.com/mil/2010-06/12/content_13656151.htm.

point in exercising the American power as central to the new American security strategy under the Obama administration.²⁷ As Hillary Clinton puts it at the Brookings Institution, the United States is ‘shifting from mostly direct exercise and application of power to a more sophisticated and difficult mix of indirect power and influence’, the so-called ‘smart power’.²⁸

Policy Challenges to China

- 5.1 Many Chinese analysts are positive about the new American security strategy as conducive to improving global security, with its new emphasis on the role of international institutions, on collective action through partnership with not only traditional allies, but also new and emerging powers, and on a new security agenda topped with many non-traditional security issues.²⁹
- 5.2 Such a security strategy opens up opportunities for more China-US cooperation on a wide range of regional and global issues.
- 5.3 As the NSS 2010 defines the proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional states as one of the top national security priorities of the United States, North Korea and Iran will remain the biggest security concern of the United States. Because China is seen close to both North Korea and Iran, Chinese policies toward them will continue to be contested by the United States.
- 5.4 Beijing remains uncomfortable with any collective action under the auspices of US-led (or US defined) multilateralism. Yet, identified as one of the emerging centers of influence, it has to design a set of policies for

²⁷ Hillary Rodham Clinton, ‘Remarks on the Obama Administration’s National Security Strategy’, The Brookings Institution, Washington D. C., 27 May 2010.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ He Jinzhe, ‘zhuanjia: mei xin guojia anquan zhanlue youliyu gaishan guoji anquan xingshi’ (The New National Security Strategy of the United States Is Seen as Conducive to Improving Global Security, Experts Say), at <http://gb.cri.cn/27824/2010/05/28/110s2867443.htm>.

international cooperation that take seriously its shared responsibilities in shaping the emerging global order.

- 5.5 Beijing will also have to respond creatively to the US call for it to take on ‘a more responsible leadership role’ in dealing with pressing regional and global issues. This will test the political will of the Chinese leadership to significantly modify, if not totally abandon, one key principle that has proved successful so far in guiding Chinese foreign policies as China rises, the principle of ‘hiding one’s capacities and biding one’s time’ (韬光养晦).