



PROCEEDINGS

ASSESSING THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

The remarks below were delivered at a symposium on “Assessing the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy” hosted by the National Institute for Public Policy on November 16, 2022. The symposium highlighted the continuities and discontinuities between the Biden Administration’s strategy documents and those of the Trump Administration and its predecessors.

David J. Trachtenberg

David J. Trachtenberg is Vice President of the National Institute for Public Policy and served as Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 2017-2019.

Just last month, after a lengthy delay, the Biden Administration finally released the unclassified versions of its National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS). Within the NDS were two other unclassified strategy documents—the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and the Missile Defense Review (MDR).

Taken together, these documents are a smorgasbord of what I would call “the good,” “the bad,” and “the ugly.”

First, the good: I am struck by some of the continuities that exist between this administration’s strategy focus and that of the Trump Administration. Most prominent is the National Security Strategy’s and National Defense Strategy’s validation of the Trump Administration’s refocusing of U.S. attention on the threats to U.S. interests posed by China and Russia—what the 2017 NSS and 2018 NDS referred to as the reemergence of “great power competition.”¹ Indeed, the 2022 NDS explicitly states, “The PRC and Russia now pose more dangerous challenges to safety and security at home...” and notes that both “could use a wide array of tools” to hinder U.S. national security actions.²

Even the 2022 NPR reinforces some of the same fundamental principles supported by the Trump Administration as well as its predecessors: support for the nuclear Triad and a commitment to modernize all three “legs”; revitalizing our nuclear infrastructure; support for extended deterrence; even a rejection of “sole purpose and “no first use” policies that the president himself openly favored.

In short, the 2022 NSS and NDS seem to suggest that when it comes to identifying and focusing on the most serious threats to U.S. national security, the Trump Administration got it right.

¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, p. 27, available at <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

² Department of Defense, *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 5, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.



As for the bad, the 2022 NSS and NDS list a host of wonderful things we will do but provide no specific details on how we will do them. In his book, *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy*, Richard Rumelt notes that:

A good strategy does more than urge us forward toward a goal or vision. A good strategy honestly acknowledges the challenges being faced and provides an approach to overcoming them.... Bad strategy tends to skip over pesky details...and ignores the power of choice and focus, trying instead to accommodate a multitude of conflicting demands and interests.³

And as the eminent strategist Colin Gray explained:

Through frequent abuse the noun, strategy, and inevitably the adjective, strategic, have lost much conceptual integrity.... misunderstanding of strategy, often in the past as also commonly in the present, has been exceedingly painful and expensive. It is improbable that the conceptual habits of generations can or would be turned around, but one can always try.⁴

Strategy should link goals with ways and means, but the NSS and NDS fail to do so. They appear to be little more than aspirational wish lists. For example, the NSS says, “We will build the strongest and broadest possible coalition of nations that seek to cooperate with each other...”⁵ “We will pursue an affirmative agenda to advance peace and security and to promote prosperity in every region.”⁶ “We also will build new ways to work with allies and partners on development and the expansion of human dignity....”⁷

Likewise, the NDS says DoD “will continue to develop operational concepts that realistically expand U.S. options and constrain those of potential adversaries.”⁸ It says we will “actively campaign across domains and the spectrum of conflict.”⁹ It says we will “improve our ability...to achieve warfighting objectives,”¹⁰ “tailor” our deterrence approaches,¹¹ and build “enduring advantages.”¹² This, of course, all falls under the rubric

³ Richard P. Rumelt, *Good Strategy/Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why it Matters* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 2011), pp. 4-5.

⁴ Colin S. Gray, “Why Strategy is Different,” *Infinity Journal* (Volume 6, Issue 4, Summer 2019), pp. 4-8, available at <https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com/article/why-strategy-is-different/>.

⁵ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, October 2022, p. 7, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸ Department of Defense, *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 17., op. cit.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

of “integrated deterrence”—a concept that requires us to implement “a holistic response” to the security challenges we face.¹³

All of this is unobjectionable in principle, but exactly how are we to do this? How will we prioritize against competing requirements? And what are the implications of that prioritization for assuring allies and deterring adversaries?

And now for the ugly: Where the NSS and NDS veer off target is in their portrayal of a host of non-traditional issues as essential to national security. For example, the NSS declares, “Of all of the shared problems we face, climate change is the greatest and potentially existential for all nations.”¹⁴ It therefore elevates the global protection of forests to a national security imperative.¹⁵ It calls for strengthening international health systems and cites the need “to build sustained food security” as a priority.¹⁶ Similarly, the NDS raises climate change and other “transboundary challenges” to the level of national security priorities.¹⁷

Such noble aspirational goals may indeed be praiseworthy, but I believe they tend to dilute and obscure the importance of addressing nearer-term matters of perhaps greater urgency to American security.

There are other problems with the administration’s strategy documents, not the least of which is a slew of seemingly inconsistent language, perhaps intended to satisfy to various competing constituencies. The NPR provides perhaps the most glaring examples. While it acknowledges China and Russia are expanding their reliance on nuclear weapons and states that the U.S. will “maintain nuclear forces that are responsive to the threats we face”¹⁸ and will consider force adjustments to strengthen deterrence, it says we will reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons and cancel the SLCM-N and B-83. And while it eliminates “hedging” against uncertainty as an explicit role for U.S. nuclear forces, it states the U.S. will work to ensure “credible deterrence...in the face of significant uncertainties and unanticipated challenges.”¹⁹ This certainly sounds like hedging to me.

And after acknowledging the growing missile threat to the homeland posed by both Russia and China, the strategy documents reject any efforts to actively defend the homeland against such growing threats.

These inconsistencies suggest an approach that seeks, in Rumelt’s words, “to accommodate a multitude of conflicting demands and interests,” and, therefore, falls into the category of “bad strategy.”

¹³ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁴ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, October 2022, p. 9, op. cit.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁷ Department of Defense, *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 6., op. cit.

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *2022 Nuclear Posture Review*, p. 12, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/uploads.fas.org/2022/10/27113658/2022-Nuclear-Posture-Review.pdf>.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

Douglas J. Feith

Douglas J. Feith is former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

The Biden Administration's national security strategy, as released to the public, has some praiseworthy elements, stressing, for example, the "need for American leadership." But it does not take its own words seriously enough. Its discussion of "leadership" is confusing, and the administration is not providing for the kind of military strength that would make U.S. leadership effective.

A Preliminary Word on Precision

A strategy should not use vague and ambiguous language (let alone mind-numbing repetition). Having said that no nation is better positioned than the United States to compete in shaping the world, as long as we work with others who share our vision, the strategy declares (the italics are mine), "This means that the foundational principles of self-determination, territorial integrity, and political independence *must* be respected, international institutions *must* be strengthened, countries *must* be free to determine their own foreign policy choices, information *must* be allowed to flow freely, universal human rights *must* be upheld, and the global economy *must* operate on a level playing field and provide opportunity for all." The fuzziness—incoherence—of using the word "must" should be obvious.

For example: "The United States *must* . . . increase international cooperation on shared challenges even in an age of greater inter-state competition." But "some in Beijing" insist that a prerequisite for cooperation is a set of "concessions on unrelated issues" that the U.S. government has said are unacceptable. So the strategy effectively declares that cooperation with China is a "must" even when China says we cannot have it. In other words, the word "must" doesn't really mean "must." In this case, it expresses no more than the administration's impotent preference.

This strategy is 48 pages long. It uses the word "must" 39 times. To drive home that President Biden is not his predecessor, the strategy constantly emphasizes allies and partners. It uses the word "allies" 38 times and "partner" or "partnership" an astounding 167 times. Meanwhile, it does not use "enemy" even once. Two of the three times it uses the word "adversary" it is referring to "potential" rather than actual adversaries. The third time, it says only that America's network of allies and partners is "the envy of our adversaries."

Enemies and Hostile Ideology

The strategy identifies, correctly in my view, America's "most pressing challenges" as China and Russia. China is described as the only "competitor" with both the intent and power to "reshape the international order." Russia is called "an immediate threat to the free and open international system," while the Ukraine war is rightly characterized as "brutal and unprovoked." The discussion of enemies, however, is euphemistic and misleading and does

not give explicit guidance on confronting them. Alluding to China and Russia, it talks of “competing with major autocratic powers” as if everyone in the “competition” is playing a gentlemanly game with agreed rules. That creates a false picture of the problem.

The strategy states that China “retains common interests” with the United States “because of various interdependencies on climate, economics and public health.” In discussing “shared challenges”—such as climate change or COVID—it implies that Chinese leaders see these challenges the same way the administration does, but the well-known recent history of Chinese secretiveness about COVID, for example, refutes that assumption.

There are references to pragmatic problem-solving “based on shared interests” with countries like China and Iran. The strategy does not explain, however, what U.S. officials should do if such cooperation is inconsistent with other U.S. interests. Should they work with China at the expense of opposition to genocide against the Uighurs? Should they work with Iran at the expense of that country’s pro-democracy resistance movement?

Iran and North Korea are called “autocratic powers,” but being autocratic is not the key to their hostility and danger. Rather, it is that they are ideologically hostile to the United States and the West.

There are two passing references to “violent extremism,” though no discussion whatever about anti-Western ideologies. U.S. officials are given no direction to take action to counter such ideologies. The strategy is entirely silent on jihadism and extremist Islam.

Leadership and Followership—Ties to Allies and Partners

While it properly calls attention to the value of America’s “unmatched network of alliances and partnerships,” the strategy does not deal adequately with questions of when the United States should lead rather than simply join its allies. It does not acknowledge that there may be cases when the United States is required to go it alone. President Biden is quoted as telling the United Nations, “[W]e will lead. . . . But we will not go it alone. We will lead together with our Allies and partners.” But what if American and allied officials disagree? Sometimes the only way to lead is to show that one is willing to go it alone.

Failing to distinguish between leadership and followership is a major flaw. While asserting that America aspires to the former, the strategy declares that “we will work in lockstep with our allies.” Such lockstep would ensure that the United States is constrained by the lower-common-denominator policy of our allies. If President Biden really believes what he is saying here, he is telling his team to refrain from initiatives that any or all of our allies might reject. Instead of soliciting ideas from administration officials that would serve the U.S. interest even if they require campaigns to try (perhaps unsuccessfully) to persuade our allies to acquiesce, his strategy discourages initiative and efforts to persuade. That is the opposite of leadership.

The strategy says that “our alliances and partnerships around the world are our most important strategic asset.” But that is not correct; our military power is. This is a dangerous mistake. Our alliances can be highly valuable, but to suggest that they are more important than our military capabilities is wrong and irresponsible.

The document says, “Our strategy is rooted in our national interests.” This assertion is at odds with the insistence that America will not act abroad except in concert with our allies and partners. The strategy claims that “Most nations around the world define their interests in ways that are compatible with ours.” That, however, is either banal or untrue. Our European allies have important differences with us regarding China, Iran, Israel, trade and other issues. Before the Ukraine war, they had major differences with us regarding Russia.

The strategy says, “As we modernize our military and work to strengthen our democracy at home, we will call on our allies to do the same.” What if they do not heed the call, however? For decades, U.S. officials complained vainly that NATO allies underinvested in defense, confident that the United States would cover any shortfalls—what economists call a free-riding problem. Along similar lines, the strategy declares that America’s alliances “must be deepened and modernized.” But how should U.S. officials deal with allies who act adversely to U.S. interests, as Turkey has so often done under Erdogan—in buying Russian air-defense systems, for example—and as the Germans did, before the Ukraine war, in increasing their dependence on Russian natural gas?

Interestingly, on strengthening the U.S. military, the strategy does not say that U.S. allies have to agree or cooperate. It says, “America will not hesitate to use force when necessary to defend our national interests.” This part of the document reads as if it had different authors from the rest.

Nuclear Deterrence

The strategy makes an important point about nuclear deterrence as “a top priority” and highlights that America faces an unprecedented challenge in now having to deter two major nuclear powers. It makes a commitment to “modernizing the nuclear Triad, nuclear command, control, and communications, and our nuclear weapons infrastructure, as well as strengthening our extended deterrence commitments to our Allies.” But the administration has not allocated resources to fulfill its words on deterrence and Triad modernization.

Promoting Democracy and Human Rights

“Autocrats are working overtime to undermine democracy and export a model of governance marked by repression at home and coercion abroad,” the strategy accurately notes, adding that, around the world, America will work to strengthen democracy and promote human rights. It would be helpful if it also explained why other country’s respect for democracy tends to serve the U.S. national interest. This is not obvious and many Americans, including members of Congress, show no understanding of how democracy promotion abroad can help the United States bolster security, freedom and prosperity at home.

The strategy does not explain how its championing of democracy and human-rights promotion can be squared with its emphasis on respecting the culture and sovereignty of other countries and not interfering in their internal affairs. Nor does it explain how officials

should make trade-offs between support for the rights of foreigners and practical interests in dealing with non-democratic countries. Officials need guidance on such matters. The public also would benefit from explanations.

The administration just announced that Saudi Arabia's crown prince, who is also prime minister, has immunity from civil liability for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi journalist who worked for *The Washington Post*. The strategy does not shed light on how the relevant considerations were weighed. It says the United States will make use of partnerships with non-democratic countries that support our interests, "while we continue to press all partners to respect and advance democracy and human rights." That's fine as far as it goes, but it does not acknowledge, for example, that we sometimes have to subordinate human rights concerns for national security purposes, as when President Franklin Roosevelt allied with Stalin against Hitler. A strategy document should be an aid in resolving complexities, not a simplistic list of all the noble things we desire or wish to be associated with.

Refugees

Regarding refugees, it is sensible that the strategy reaffirms the U.S. interest in working with other countries "to achieve sustainable, long-term solutions to what is the most severe refugee crisis since World War Two—including through resettlement." But there is no mention of why U.S. officials should press Persian Gulf states to accept more refugees from the Middle East, given that those states share language, culture and religion with those refugees.

Willing Ends Without Providing Means

The strategy does a lot of willing the end but not specifying or providing the means. As noted, the administration is not funding defense as it should to accomplish its stated goals. On Iran, the strategy says, "[W]e have worked to enhance deterrence," but U.S. officials have been trying to revive the nuclear deal that would give Iran huge financial resources in return for limited and unreliable promises.

The strategy says, "We will support the European aspirations of Georgia and Moldova.... We will assist partners in strengthening democratic institutions, the rule of law, and economic development in the Western Balkans. We will back diplomatic efforts to resolve conflict in the South Caucasus. We will continue to engage with Turkey to reinforce its strategic, political, economic, and institutional ties to the West. We will work with allies and partners to manage the refugee crisis created by Russia's war in Ukraine. And, we will work to forestall terrorist threats to Europe." But these items are presented simply as a wish list, without explanation of the means we will use, the costs involved or the way we will handle obvious pitfalls along the way.

Setting Priorities

A strategy paper should establish priorities, but this one simply says we have to do this and that, when the actions are inconsistent with each other. It is line with the quip attributed to Yogi Berra: When you get to a fork in the road, take it. It says we should act in the U.S. national interest, but we should also always act with allies and partners. We should oppose Chinese threats, but always cooperate with China on climate issues. We should pursue the nuclear deal with Iran even when Iran is threatening its neighbors and aiding Russia in Ukraine (and, as noted, crushing its domestic critics). We should insist on a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict while the Palestinian Authority remains unreasonable, corrupt, inflexible and hostile.

A strategy should not set up choices that involve trade-offs and then give no guidance on how to resolve the trade-offs. If it promotes arms control and other types of cooperation (on COVID, for example) with Russia and China, it should forthrightly address problems of treaty violations and specify ways to obtain cooperation when it is denied.

Such a document cannot specifically identify all possible trade-offs and resolve them, but it can set priorities and do a better job than this strategy does in informing officials on how to handle easily anticipated dilemmas.

Strategic Guidance or Campaign Flyer

The administration's strategy combines valid points and unreality. It is unclear whether it is a serious effort to provide guidance, directed at officials, or a boastful campaign document, directed at the public. Mixing the genres is not useful.

Christopher A. Ford

Christopher A. Ford is former Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation.

Following such terrific commentary from friends and colleagues I've worked with in various capacities over the years in the George W. Bush Administration, at Hudson Institute, and in the Trump Administration, it's a hard to add much, and I agree with the points David, Doug, Nadia, and Bridge have made. I should make clear in this regard, however, that I'm only speaking for myself here, and not (for instance) for the MITRE Corporation or the Hoover Institution.

But by way of putting my own gloss on things, let me flag a few of the points that first jumped out at me from the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the National Defense Strategy (NDS). (I'll also add a dusting of comments about the Nuclear Posture Review [NPR], if you can forgive me a little digression in a good cause.)

So let's start with what I see as the biggest failing of the National Security Strategy: it suffers from a structural weakness that significantly undermines its utility in performing its most critical function. A "National Security Strategy" is supposed to serve as an overall guide for how to focus strategic planning, prioritization, and the allocation of scarce resources of time, energy, attention, and funding.

Yet the NSS seems unable or unwilling to prioritize and focus upon the most critical national security challenges. In fact, imports a range of politically controversial elements of President Biden's *domestic* agenda into the discussion as "national security" objectives. That not only risks undermining the prospects for actually *implementing* a consistent U.S. national security strategy with meaningful bipartisan support over time. It also blurs the focus of the document, in some respects so much that it can be difficult to see how it can provide much guidance for national security prioritization at all.

The list of what are basically *domestic* policy agenda items in the "national security" priorities of the NSS is quite impressive. Liberalizing U.S. immigration policy, for instance, makes an appearance, as does making "unprecedented generational investments" in clean energy and "creating millions of good paying jobs and strengthening American industries."

Health care access and gun control are also said to be U.S. national security priorities, as well as fixing what are said to be longstanding economic rules and policies that "privilege corporate mobility over workers and the environment, thereby exacerbating inequality and the climate crisis." It is also apparently critical to U.S. national security that we "counter[er] anticompetitive practices, bring[] worker voices to the decision-making table, and ensur[e] high labor and environmental standards." The NSS promises, furthermore, to "protect and promote voting rights and expand democratic participation ... building on the work of generations of activists to advance equity and root out systemic disparities in our laws, policies, and institutions."

In short, the reader of the Biden Administration's new NSS might be forgiven for concluding that it is a "national security" imperative for the United States to implement the entire domestic policy agenda of the progressive wing of the Democrat Party. Whatever one thinks of the particular measures it advocates, therefore, this undermines the document as a useful statement of national security priorities.

I hope this is just an unfortunate but substantively fairly inconsequential example of the performative virtue-signaling that Doug, Nadia, and Bridge have pointed out in the NSS. The danger, however, is that this is actually how the Administration think's about national security. And that would be worrisome, since if most of your domestic policy agenda is called out as a priority in your flagship document on national security priorities, it's hard to say that you really *have* national security priorities. If *everything* you want to do is a "national security" imperative, then *nothing* really is—and there is no way to think intelligibly about strategic prioritization. So that's a big failing.

But, in fairness, there are also things to like in the NSS and the NDS.

To me, one of the most striking things about these new documents is the degree to which the current administration now seems admit that the "hawks" in the U.S. national security policy community basically read the strategic environment right after all. This is especially

the case where it comes to calling out threats from revisionist great power challengers—including *nuclear weapons* threats that the Biden Administration very clearly feels make further disarmament progress impossible without dramatic changes in strategic policy by those strategic competitors. (I guess the Biden Administration's NPR, you might say, is where Barack Obama's "Prague Speech" of April 2009 goes to die.)

All this is a pretty big deal, and I hope will send a strong signal to our adversaries that America is finally taking great power competition seriously on both sides of the political aisle. The Biden Administration, after all, now agrees with the signature innovation of the Trump Administration's national security team. According to the new NSS, after all, "the post-Cold War era is definitively over and a competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next." And it claims the U.S. Government is firmly devoted to succeeding in that strategic competition.

Of course, as a hawkish conservative, I wish for the country's sake that things weren't so deep into "we told you so" territory here. And I certainly wish the Left hadn't excoriated *us* so much at the time for our hard-nosed approach to competitive posture and nuclear weapons policy, which they now admit is what America needs. And it's shockingly *late* for them to be first articulating that our country has this problem and needs to get serious about competing. Nevertheless, it's good to see the recognition—and that's an agenda on which we can all work together in an era in which politics is otherwise terribly fractious and polarized.

Yet I think the Biden Administration's latest strategic guidance still falls short—and here I'll depart a little bit from our discussions so far by also flagging the new NPR. It's a fundamental tenet of the new NPR that the United States will "maintain nuclear forces that are responsive to the threats we face." These new guidance documents also make clear that such threats are clearly *increasing* dramatically.

But having promised to maintain nuclear forces responsive to these escalating threats, when it comes to actual nuclear weapons systems, the Administration either simply continues the *status quo* (*i.e.*, with "Triad" recapitalization) or actually *cuts* nuclear weapons programs (the SLCM-N program and the B83-1 gravity bomb). There is quite literally no sign of any movement in or which U.S. nuclear force posture or policy that actually *responds* to the admittedly increasing threats we face. In the face of that growing nuclear threat, in other words, the NPR forswears increasing the *size* of the U.S. nuclear stockpile and eliminates two nuclear weapons systems, each of which provides a unique *type* of nuclear capability for which no replacement is as yet anywhere on the horizon.

Almost by its own admission, therefore, the Biden Administration's nuclear strategy falls short of its own promises and thus shortchanges U.S. national security. This will not be very reassuring to the allies and partners the Biden Administration claims to prize, it is likely to create all sorts of problems in Congress, and it certainly doesn't seem good for the overall efficacy of U.S. nuclear deterrence. So that's not a good thing.

But let me conclude by pivoting again back to more hopeful elements of the new documents. Creditably, the Biden NPR says some pretty sound things about the importance of recapitalizing the U.S. nuclear weapons production infrastructure so that it can "respond

in a timely way to threat developments and technology opportunities” and be able to “produce weapons required in the near-term and beyond.”

I hope that is sincerely meant, since our crumbling infrastructure is a longstanding problem for which both political parties and multiple administrations and Congresses deserve great blame. And fixing the problem will be hard: finally achieving such a genuinely responsive infrastructure will take no small amount of money, time, and effort. So I’m very glad the NPR calls it out as a priority objective. And I think such an infrastructure modernization agenda can be—and *must* be—a key focus of bipartisan attention, and a considerable contribution to the efficacy of what the NSS and NDS call “integrated deterrence.”

Which brings me to my final point. I’m intrigued by the calls in the NSS and NDS for approaches to competitive strategy based on “integrated deterrence” and “campaigning.” They clearly articulate the aspiration to respond to our adversaries’ “holistic” strategies with a “holistic” and coordinated U.S. approach to situational awareness, policy development, and policy implementation of our own. A serious effort to develop such a capability would be very welcome, for these are things that (let’s be honest) the U.S. Government isn’t traditionally very good at.

So this call for integration and coordination seems quite sensible to me, as long as ideas like “integrated deterrence” aren’t simply used to make excuses for skimping on the various elements of “hard power” that provide so much of deterrence’s underlying foundation. (“Don’t worry about that canceled missile program,” one might imagine the argument going. “We’ll make up for it with ‘integrated deterrence!’”) I don’t see much sign of such excuse-making yet, however, and I hope that the Administration really takes this idea of holistic coordination seriously, and is willing to devote to it the attention, resources, and top-cover that such an effort would require.

So on the whole, I give the new suite of Biden Administration security guidance documents a mixed review. They *do* fall short in some key regards. But there’s still much to work with in them, and which can be starting points for shared endeavor across the political divide to improve deterrence and make our national security bureaucracy better able to meet the challenges ahead.