US National Interests

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“This review is now complete. And as Commander-in-Chief, I have determined that it is in our vital national interest to send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan. After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home. These are the resources that we need to seize the initiative, while building the Afghan capacity that can allow for a responsible transition of our forces out of Afghanistan.”
AMERICA’S NATIONAL INTERESTS
A Report from The Commission on America’s National Interests

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SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Vital

Vital national interests are conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance Americans’ survival and well-being in a free and secure nation.

Vital US national interests are to:

1. Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons attacks on the United States or its military forces abroad;
2. Ensure US allies’ survival and their active cooperation with the US in shaping an international system in which we can thrive;
3. Prevent the emergence of hostile major powers or failed states on US borders;
4. Ensure the viability and stability of major global systems (trade, financial markets, supplies of energy, and the environment); and
5. Establish productive relations, consistent with American national interests, with nations that could become strategic adversaries, China and Russia.

Instrumentally, these vital interest will be enhanced and protected by promoting singular US leadership, military and intelligence capabilities, credibility (including a reputation for adherence to clear US commitments and even-handedness in dealing with other states), and strengthening critical international institutions – particularly the US alliance system around the world.
SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS

Extremely Important

Extremely important national interest are condition that, if compromises, would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Extremely important US national interests are to:

1. Prevent, deter, and reduce the threat of the use of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons anywhere;
2. Prevent the regional proliferation of WMD and delivery systems;
3. Promote the acceptance on international rules of law and mechanisms for resolving or managing disputes peacefully;
4. Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemony important regions, especially the Persian Gulf;
5. Promote the well-being of US allies and friends and protect them from external aggression;
6. Promote democracy, prosperity, and stability in the Western Hemisphere;
7. Prevent, manage, and, if possible at reasonable cost, end major conflicts in important geographic regions;
8. Maintain a lead in key military-related and other strategic technologies, particularly information systems;
9. Prevent massive, uncontrolled immigration across US borders;
10. Suppress terrorism (especially state-sponsored terrorism), transnational crime, and drug trafficking; and
11. Prevent genocide.
Important

Important national interests are conditions that, if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

Important US national interests are to:

1. Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries;
2. Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization;
3. Prevent and, if possible at low cost, end conflicts in strategically less significant geographic regions;
4. Protect the lives and well-being of American citizens who are targeted or taken hostage by terrorist organizations;
5. Reduce the economic gap between rich and poor nations;
6. Prevent the nationalization of US-owned assets abroad;
7. Boost the domestic output of key strategic industries and sectors;
8. Maintain and edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations;
9. Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements; and
10. Maximize US GNP growth from international trade and investment.

Instrumentally, the important US national interests are to maintain a strong UN and other regional and functional cooperative mechanisms.
**SUMMARY OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS**

*Less Important or Secondary*

Less important or secondary national interests are not unimportant. They are important and desirable conditions, but ones that have little direct impact on the ability of the US government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation.

*Less important or secondary US national interests include:*

1. Balancing bilateral trade deficits;
2. Enlarging democracy everywhere for its own sake;
3. Preserving the territorial integrity or particular political constitution of other states everywhere; and
4. Enhancing exports of specific economic sectors.
Barack Obama:

• “The single most important national security threat that we face is nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists.”

George W. Bush:

• “The biggest threat facing the country is weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terrorist network.”
The Greatest Threat

**Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States:**

“It appears that we are at a ‘tipping point’ in proliferation. If Iran and North Korea proceed unchecked to build nuclear arsenals, there is a serious possibility of a cascade of proliferation following.”

**U.N. High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change:**

“We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation.”
What if?

Times Square, New York City

www.nuclearterror.org
“Just one nuclear weapon exploded in a city—be it New York or Moscow; Tokyo or Beijing; London or Paris—could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And it would badly destabilize our security, our economies, and our very way of life.”

-- President Obama (September, 2009)

**Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe**
Proposition I: Inevitable

*On the current track, nuclear terrorism is inevitable.*

vs.

Proposition II: Preventable

*Nuclear terrorism is preventable by a feasible, affordable agenda of actions—some of which we are not taking, others which we are not taking fast enough.*
Proposition I: Inevitable

*On the current track, nuclear terrorism is inevitable.*

If the U.S. and other governments just keep doing what they are doing today, a nuclear terrorist attack in a major city is more likely than not in the decade ahead.
Warren Buffett:

“It’s inevitable. I don’t see any way that it won’t happen.”

"If the chance of a weapon of mass destruction being used in a given year is 10 percent and the same probability persists for 50 years, the probability of the event happening at least once during that 50 years is 99.5 percent. Thus the chance of getting through the 50-year period without a disaster is 0.51 percent — just slightly better than one in 200.”
Inevitable: Best Judgments

• “The most senior leaders of Al Qaeda are still singularly focused on acquiring WMD…the main threat is the nuclear one. I am convinced that this is where Osama bin Laden and his operatives desperately want to go.” – Former CIA Director, George Tenet (2007)

• “Every senior leader, when you're asked what keeps you awake at night, it's the thought of a terrorist ending up with a weapon of mass destruction, especially nuclear.” – Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates (2008)

• “The biggest nightmare that any of us have is that one of these terrorist member organizations within this syndicate of terror will get their hands on a weapon of mass destruction.” – Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton (2010)


• “The risk of just one terrorist with just one nuclear weapon is a risk we simply cannot afford to take.” - Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Terrorism, John Brennan (2009)
Proposition I: Inevitable

On the current track, nuclear terrorism is inevitable.

1. **Who** could be planning a nuclear terrorist attack?
2. **What** nuclear weapons could terrorists use?
3. **Where** could terrorists acquire a nuclear bomb?
4. **When** could terrorists launch the first nuclear attack?
5. **How** could terrorists deliver a nuclear weapon to its target?
Proposition II: Preventable

*Nuclear terrorism is preventable* by a feasible, affordable agenda of actions—some of which we are not taking, others which we are not taking fast enough.
"If the annual chance can be reduced to 1 percent, there is a 60.5 percent chance of making it through 50 years."
Preventable: How?

A global strategy to prevent nuclear terrorism can be organized under a Doctrine of 3 No’s:

**Doctrine of 3 No’s**

- No Loose Nukes
- No New Nascent Nukes
- No New Nuclear Weapon States
Preventable: How?

*No Loose Nukes* requires securing all nuclear weapons and weapons-usable material, on the fastest possible timetable, to a new “gold standard.”

**Urgent Challenge: Russia, Pakistan, Belarus**

*No New Nascent Nukes* means no new national capabilities to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium.

**Urgent Challenge: Iran**

*No New Nuclear Weapon States* draws a line under the current 8 ½ nuclear powers and says unambiguously: “Stop. No more.”

**Urgent Challenge: North Korea**
Preventable: The most urgent tasks

**No Loose Nukes**
- Global “gold standard”
- Assured Nuclear Security: transparency sufficient to allow leaders to assure their citizens that terrorists will never get a nuclear bomb from another member
- Global cleanout of all fissile material that cannot be secured to gold standard.

**No New Nascent Nukes**
- Orchestration of carrots and sticks to persuade Iran to postpone enrichment
- Multilateral guaranteed fuel bargain
- Use of 5-10 year moratorium to repair/reconstruct nonproliferation regime

**No New Nuclear Weapon States**
- Subordinate all policy objectives on N. Korea (e.g., regime change) to stopping DPRK’s nuclear program
- Motivate China to persuade North Korea to freeze new fissile material production
- Offer carrots (including security guarantee) in exchange for verifiable dismantlement of nuclear program
- Articulate credibly a principle of enforced nuclear accountability
• **Reduce Role of Nukes in USNSS.** Reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same.

• **Secure in Four Years.** A new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years.

• **Negotiate new Agreements.** Negotiate follow-on arms control agreement reducing American and Russian nuclear arsenals, ratifying the CTBT outlawing future nuclear weapon tests, and stopping all production of fissile material.

• **Stronger IAEA.** More resources and authority to strengthen international inspections.

“We must ensure that terrorists never acquire a nuclear weapon. This is the most immediate and extreme threat to global security.”
“Nuclear terrorism is by far the most important problem of our time. And this is the most important book that has been written on this subject.” – Warren Buffett, 2005 Annual Report