The End of an Era

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If leaders around the world could agree on one word to describe the recently published U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), it would probably be unorthodox. This strategy clearly departs from all previous National Security Strategies since 1945 by spelling out that maintaining its role as a global leader is not in the best interest of the United States. Instead, the document reframes the foreign and security policies of previous administrations as overly ambitious and misaligned with core American priorities. Thus, the document presents a more limited conception of national interests and argues for withdrawing from commitments that it portrays as costly obligations that do not clearly benefit the United States. This is particularly

demonstrated in the sections about world regions. This brief will therefore examine what the NSS says about the U.S. stance on the Western Hemisphere, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Western Hemisphere

When it comes to the Administration's strategy for the Americas, one can observe a general alignment to the Monroe Doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine is a concept originally formulated by former President James Monroe in 1823. This doctrine implies that the Western Hemisphere and the Eastern Hemisphere are two distinct geographical and geopolitical regions meaning the two should not interfere in each other's affairs. The doctrine also reasserts the United States' pre-eminence in both North America and Latin America. The NSS resuscitates this doctrine by adding a so-called "Trump Corollary" to it, defining that the Western Hemisphere must be controlled by the U.S. economically, politically and militarily.

According to the Chatham House, the main objective of the Trump Corollary of the Monroe Doctrine defined in the strategy is to assert US dominance in the region in order to combat drug trafficking, illegal immigration and to prevent any other major power namely China and European powers to gain a foothold in the region. The US also wants to retain and gain access to critical infrastructure and supply chains in the region.

The strategy asserts that the nations of the Western Hemisphere must reduce their dependencies of non-Hemispheric actors by aligning themselves closer to the interests of the U.S. The strategy outlines that instead of opting for foreign aid from non-Hemispheric countries, they should choose to import American products, rely on American companies to build infrastructure and on US financial opportunities. The strategy outlines that it is the job of diplomats and government officials to convince and to pressure countries to adopt policies that enhance partnerships with the U.S. government and the private sector as well.

Asia

Despite the ongoing tensions with China in terms of economics and trade, the NSS minces its words compared to the harsh criticism that is aimed towards Europe. In the Indo-Pacific region, the strategy of the administration seems to be that of deterrence, balance of power and the avoidance of any military confrontation with China.

The NSS mainly seeks to keep the Indo-Pacific region an open economic area for trade and security cooperation. The main objective of the Trump Administration is to rebalance trade between the U.S. and China. Apart from tariffs, the NSS outlines the need for both the U.S. and its allies in the Indo-Pacific region to turn around their trade deficits with China. The NSS also stresses the importance of deepened cooperation between the U.S.

and its traditional allies including Australia, Japan and South Korea in both economic and security matters.

Regarding Taiwan, the NSS treads a fine line and stops short of any heavy criticism towards China but reiterates that the objective of the Trump Administration is to make sure that trade passes unfettered through the Taiwan Strait and that Taiwan remains an independent entity from the People's Republic of China. Overall, the US will probably seek to match China militarily in the region to deter it from making any unilateral decisions regarding both Taiwan and trade in both the South China Sea and the Western Pacific.

Africa

Compared to the other regional paragraphs in the NSS, the one about Africa is considerably short, only spanning half a page. Although the Trump administration presents its Africa policy in this NSS as a radical departure from previous approaches, the core objectives largely mirror longstanding U.S. priorities on the continent. This continuity with previous approaches is particularly apparent in the mention of a collaboration "select countries," which is reminiscent of the Bush-era strategy of partnering with "anchor states." Additionally, the emphasis on developing the energy sector shows parallels with the Obama administration's initiatives to expand the access to electricity across Africa. Thus, the U.S. engagement in Africa will remain focused on the establishment of trade arrangements that serve both parties' interests, while also tapping into the continent's mineral wealth and commercial opportunities. The NSS specifically points to the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act as a model for strengthening economic engagement. Interestingly, while clearly taking a step back from the "foreign aid paradigm", the NSS also mentions the brokering of peace agreements in conflicts such as those in Sudan and between the DRC and Rwanda, as well as efforts to prevent emerging crises in the region.

Conclusion

The NSS formalizes the America First foreign policy evident in President Trump's first administration, which is now being pursued with greater rigor in his second. It advances a vision of a global order structured around clearly demarcated zones of influence, echoing earlier eras of great-power politics. Confronted by an assertive and revisionist Russia to the east, Europe must make difficult choices under this strategy. Safeguarding European security and autonomy will depend more and more on collective action through the EU, which has far greater global influence than any individual member state. However, constant tension will ensue with a U.S. administration that does not recognize the EU as a credible global player. In contrast, although many aspects continue prior U.S.-Africa policies, the NSS signifies a notable change in Washington's perspective on Africa, shifting from viewing it as

a peripheral region to acknowledging its role as a pivotal player in global geoeconomics. This shift in perspective reflects the new American understanding that power stems not only from military dominance but also from controlling strategic supply chains, critical infrastructure, and resource networks. Meanwhile, the strategy sends mixed signals to China. On one hand, it echoes the longstanding preferences of China and other non-democratic states by pledging restraint in internal political matters and affirming respect for state sovereignty. On the other hand, the revival of the Monroe Doctrine, which frames dominance in the Western Hemisphere as essential to U.S. security and economic well-being, will not be welcomed by China, which is trying to expand its influence in Latin America. Ultimately, countries around the world must reconsider their positions amid these shifting power dynamics and adapt to the fact that U.S. foreign and security policy no longer fits neatly into traditional categories of "pragmatist," "realist," or "idealistic" approaches.

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