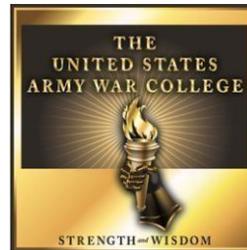


National Interest Alignment: Universal Values Versus Stability

by

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United States Army War College
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Abstract

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The U.S. National Interests presented by each Presidential Administration are codified in the National Security Strategy and serve as the foundation for U.S. policy formulation and implementation. The 2015 National Security outlines four National Interests – U.S. Security, U.S. Economic Prosperity, A Rules-based International Order, and Respect for Universal Values. Each of the National Interests evokes a different level of relative interest intensity. When compared with the other National Interests, and analyzed against ongoing foreign policy activities, Universal Values promotion is not aligned with other elements of the National Security Strategy. This inconsistency negatively effects U.S. credibility in the international community. In view of this interest conflict, the U.S. should revise the National Interests to remove Universal Values and replace it with Stability. This revision better articulates current policy actions and enhances U.S. credibility.

National Interest Alignment: Universal Values Versus Stability

The United States national security establishment has a long history of reorganizing itself since at least 1947 with the passing of the National Security Act to correct problems caused by bureaucratic control and power. The Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 was adopted as a policy to promote interagency and interdepartmental coordination, provide a basis for contingency planning, and to update Congress annually on the country's ability to meet its security commitments.¹ Section 603 of that law established the requirement for the president to provide an annual "report on national security strategy" to Congress; since its creation the National Security Strategy (NSS) has been the primary vehicle for U.S. administrations to codify and express National Interests.²

In their time, each NSS provided a justification for the structuring and implementation of the elements of national power by codifying U.S. National Interests and providing a basis for a policy and strategy formulation. By providing Ends, Ways and Means linkages, the NSS informs the supporting strategic documents, guides policy formulation, and acts as a critical communication for both domestic and international activities. While none of the last four administrations have met the requirement to annually produce a NSS, and recent administrations have only published three in the past decade, the document still serves as the foundation for U.S. policy development.³ For example, the National Interests and strategy outlined in the 2010 NSS are reflected in the 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, the 2011 National Defense Guidance, the 2012 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, and the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review.⁴ In addition to meeting the statutory requirements

outlined in Goldwater-Nichols, each administration has also used the NSS to provide both domestic and international audience's insight into its worldview.

National Interests play a paramount role in policy formulation in that they represent the manifestation of the Nation's enduring values, ethics, and beliefs.⁵ In principle, strategy, policy, and ultimately action are not just informed by the National Interests, but grounded in them. Ideally, National Interests should be clear, representative of the accepted "National Purpose," and provide policymakers with a firm footing for their decisions.⁶ Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger expressed this idea in a most succinct way, "When you're asking Americans to die, you have to be able to explain it in terms of the national interest."⁷ Although the use of National Interests provided here, as criteria for weighing options and arriving at the best decision, is their intended purpose, many policymakers have also sought to use them as a justification for a specific agenda.⁸ This practice diminishes the integrity of National Interests and undermines their intent.

The Obama administration identified four core U.S. National Interests in the May, 2010 NSS, and reconfirmed them in the recently released February 2015 update.⁹

Those interests are:

- (1) "The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners,"
- (2) "A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity,"
- (3) "Respect for universal values at home and around the world,"
- (4) "A rules based international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global

challenges.”¹⁰ (These four will be referred to as *Security*, *Economy*, *Universal Values*, and *International Order*, respectively.)

Since the same four interests have been identified in two NSSs during both terms of the Obama Administration, it would be reasonable to assume that they form the foundation for action as well as policy, however that is not consistently, or even often, the case.¹¹ *Security*, *Economy*, and *International Order* align with one another relatively easily, and rarely conflict with practical American foreign policy actions. Conversely, the stated *Universal Values* interest frequently clashes with ongoing policy implementation. Examples of this incongruence include, but are not limited to, U.S. ties to countries known to violate human rights (notably Thailand, Burma, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, and the UAE), and the extraterritorial detention facility operated at the U.S. Naval Base - Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.¹² Each of these issues represents a clear conflict between *Universal Values* and actions taken in the support of *Security*, *Economy* and the *International Order*.

Conflict between our stated National Interests and the inconsistencies between U.S. foreign policy actions and its *Universal Values* interests, negatively impact U.S. credibility. This potentially affects the implementation of policies regarding the remaining interests. This paper will address whether *Universal Values* should be included as a National Interest in the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) by juxtapositioning its meaning and messaging with past and ongoing U.S. foreign policy decisions and actions. It then recommends replacing *Universal Values* with a *Stability* National Interest, and provides a supporting argument for aligning the National Interests outlined in the NSS more closely with practical American foreign policy activities. For the

purposes of this analysis, the *Stability* National Interest is defined as the conditions of predictive regularity in key regions that enhances U.S. security interests and enables U.S. economic prosperity. In this regard, *Stability* is characterized by regional political, economic, and social conditions that support free market access and U.S. trade; it includes cooperative mechanisms for political and economic conflict resolution; and regional military powers balanced as to deter aggression.

In “Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice,” Alexander George presents the concept of “value-complexity” associated with policy development, defining it as “the presence of multiple competing values and interests that are imbedded in a single issue.”¹³ George contends that decision makers are often faced with “value trade-offs” when no useful mechanism for judging options between policies exist. Taking this concept and applying it to National Interests, it can be argued that the NSS, by introducing Universal Values as a National Interest, has unnecessarily created something tantamount to interest-complexity.

The proposition that National Interests are the basis for strategy and policy formulation is reinforced by the Obama Administration’s reorganization of the 2015 NSS using the National Interests as chapter headings.¹⁴ This change represents a stylistic evolution of the 2010 NSS, and a return to the structure used by the Bush Administration in the 2002 and 2006 NSS’s.¹⁵ Perhaps more importantly, it brings National Interests to the foreground of discussion more so than any time since the introduction of the Nixon Doctrine.¹⁶ The Obama NSSs also reinforce the preeminence of National Interests over previous versions through the use of direct language. Both the

2010 and 2015 NSSs clearly speak of “National Interests”, unlike those published by both the Clinton and Bush Administrations that refer to “objectives” and “goals.”¹⁷

No nation, not even the U.S., possesses limitless resources, power, or will to address every interest. Therefore, it is necessary for policymakers to determine the relative importance of each National Interest when deciding how to use the elements of power in support of them. For the purpose of analyzing the four National Interests, assessing their appropriateness and alignment, and crafting an argument for alternative options, it is necessary to address the concept of interest importance or prioritization. The prioritization of interests is normally explained in terms of “intensity,” meaning the “stake that an actor has in a specific issue” that identifies the relative level of commitment.¹⁸ Interest intensity must be determined to bring context into policy formulation and implementation:

(t)he leadership of the interest-crafting actor must address its desire to influence issues and events, both external and internal, its willingness to use any or all elements of national power to defend or advance certain interests in preference to others, and potentially its willingness to do so at the expense of other actors.¹⁹

The intensity categories of “Vital, Extremely Important, Important, and Less Important or Secondary” separate interests into a prioritized hierarchy based on their relative importance and the necessity for timely action.²⁰ In its July 2000 report, the U.S. Commission on America’s National Interests codified this framework based on 11 guidelines developed to understand intensity thresholds and resulting actions to address them.²¹ Categorical schemes created to unambiguously distinguish intensity levels are bound to overlap as no model can perfectly create distinctions in human endeavors. Given this limitation, this paper uses the Commission’s framework to analyze the applicability of National Interests presented in the 2015 NSS.

“Vital National Interests” are defined as “conditions that are strictly necessary to safeguard and enhance Americans’ survival and well-being in a free and secure nation.”²² Examples of survival interests include: protection of U.S. sovereign territory; viability and stability of major global systems (i.e. trade, markets, energy, environment); prevention of the emergence of hostile or failed states adjacent to the U.S.; prevention, deterrence, and reduction of the threat of weapons of mass destruction to the U.S.; and the survival of U.S. allies with their continued ability to act within the international system.²³ Historical examples of U.S. Vital National Interests and the actions taken to support them include: stabilization of the global economic system through investment into Western Europe after WWII (Marshall Plan); and the deterrence and prevention of war with the Soviet Union alternatively through nuclear arms build-up and arms limitation treaties. In both instances, foreign policy actions taken were implemented to address specific Vital National Interests (i.e. the Marshall Plan supported the decimated global economy and ensured the survival of fragile allied governments, while the arms race and treaties deterred and prevented a war that could reach the U.S. homeland). Vital Interests are enhanced by military and intelligence superiority, a strong alliance system, and international credibility.²⁴ Protection of vital interests warrants the use of all instruments of power, to include unilateral military operations.²⁵ Essentially, “Vital National Interests” are those things that preserve the integrity of the nation and maintain its institutions and functions.²⁶

“Extremely Important National Interests” represent “conditions that, if compromised, would severely prejudice but not strictly imperil the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure

nation.”²⁷ With regard to this category of interest, “the United States should be prepared to commit forces to meet threats and to lead a coalition of forces, but only in conjunction with a coalition or allies whose vital interests are threatened.”²⁸ Examples of Extremely Important Interests are: the prevention, deterrence, and reduction of the threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) anywhere; suppression of terrorism, transnational crime, and international drug trafficking; promotion of international rules of law and the mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution; prosperity and stability in the Western Hemisphere; the promotion of the well-being of U.S. allies and friends and protection of them from external aggression; and the termination of a regionally significant conflict.²⁹ Historical examples and expressions of U.S. Extremely Important Interests are the 1823 Monroe Doctrine that sought to safeguard the Americas from the dangers of European colonialism, and the collective defense aspects of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that deter aggression against our allies.

Interests that “if compromised, would have major negative consequences for the ability of the U.S. government to safeguard and enhance the well-being of Americans in a free and secure nation” are categorized as “Important National Interests.”³⁰ In the event these conditions are threatened the U.S. “should be prepared to participate militarily, on a case-by-case basis, but only if the costs are low or others carry the lion’s share of the burden.”³¹ Otherwise, important issues can likely be resolved through a means other than direct confrontation.³² “Important National Interest” examples include: democracy promotion without destabilization in strategic areas; discouraging of human rights violations in a foreign country; fostering the growth of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from overseas trade; and the low cost prevention or termination of a

strategically insignificant conflict.³³ Active international, regional, and functional cooperative mechanisms are key in addressing Important National Interests; examples of these entities include the United Nations (U.N.) and the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

Finally, the least intense level of interest is considered “Less Important or Secondary;” while these 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.”³⁴ While it may be useful to pursue these national interests, failure to achieve this goal may have minimal impact on a nation’s ability to meet its other more intense interests.³⁵ Examples of these interests are: the general promotion of democracy everywhere, the balancing of trade deficits, or the general maintenance of the established international system.³⁶

It is also necessary to point out that the concept of interest intensity was previously presented as an element of the NSS. In both the 1998 and 1999 NSSs, President Clinton used “Vital”, “Important National Interests”, and “Humanitarian and Other Interests”, as qualifying categories to explain the interest intensity.³⁷ While some have criticized these categories as being too broad and open for interpretation, they did bring some rigor into the process.³⁸ Although the 2010 NSS did not present National Interests as prioritized or weighted, the 2015 NSS does attempt to reintroduce that rigor by identifying a list of critical strategic risks that will be used in the event “(p)olicy tradeoffs and hard choices will need to be made.”³⁹ These key strategic risks are:

- Catastrophic attack on the U.S. homeland or critical infrastructure.”

- Threats or attacks against U.S. citizens abroad and our allies.”
- Global economic crisis or widespread economic slowdown.”
- Proliferation and/or use of weapons of mass destruction.”
- Severe global infectious disease outbreaks.”
- Climate change.”
- Major energy market disruptions.”
- Significant security consequences associated with weak or failing states (including mass atrocities, regional spillover, and transnational organized crime).”⁴⁰

Security, or more specifically “(t)he security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners,” is arguably the easiest and most straightforward National Interest to explain.⁴¹ It is the entry argument into the U.S. foreign policy equation, and the reason the Goldwater-Nichols was passed in the first place. However, for the sake of comparison and analysis, it is necessary to document *Security’s* origin and relevance to U.S. policy and development.

A nation’s ability to protect its borders and citizens is both its principle purpose for existence and the most important factor in assessing its viability. In “State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror,” Robert Rotberg outlines a criteria hierarchy for assessing that viability based on the state’s capacity to deliver a “political good” to citizens (“political goods” being defined as the claims citizens make on the state in exchange for the surrender of a part of their individual sovereignty); security is identified as the most important of those criteria:

The state's prime function is to provide that political good of security—to prevent cross-border invasions and infiltrations, and any loss of territory; to eliminate domestic threats to or attacks upon the national order and social structure; to prevent crime and any related dangers to domestic human security; and to enable citizens to resolve their disputes with the state and with their fellow inhabitants without recourse to arms or other forms of physical coercion.⁴²

This definition encompasses both the physical well-being of citizens and the preservation of established domestic institutions. Therefore, when applied to the U.S., security is defined as protection of both Americans and their way of life, incorporating both the physical survival of the country and assurance of liberty.⁴³ This was understood by our forefathers and built into the foundation documents of the United States. The origins and relevance of the *Security* National Interest are an easily documented element of U.S. policy. From the Constitution, through the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, to National Security Council paper NSC-68 (officially titled “United States Objective and Programs for National Security”) of 1950, and every NSS since 1987, security has been the touchstone for U.S. policy formulation. Likewise, given the reciprocal nature of treaty agreements (i.e., Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, and the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security (ANZUS) Treaty) and U.S.’s leadership role, those safeguards have extended to allies and partner nations.⁴⁴

The protection of U.S. sovereignty, survival of its citizens, the safeguarding of domestic institutions, and protection of allies directly correlates to the highest interest intensity definition provided. Based on the criteria presented, *Security* clearly meets the threshold to be categorized as a “Vital National Interest.”⁴⁵ Likewise, “Physical Survival” and “Liberty,” defined respectively as protection of citizens and preservation of the national institutions, represent two of the three “Irreducible National Interests,” further

reinforcing their preeminence.⁴⁶ Furthermore, five of the eight strategic risks identified in the 2015 NSS (presently the only mechanism provided by the Obama Administration for measuring the highest category of intensity of National Interests) directly relate to the *Security* National Interest.⁴⁷ Each of these factors is illustrative of the relative importance of *Security* and ultimately justify why it is a National Interest.

As stated above, *Security's* position at the top of the interest intensity hierarchy has forged strategy, policy, and action since the U.S. was founded. *Security* concerns have consistently brought the U.S. into close relations with authoritarian governments as a means to advance interests and stabilize key regions. Examples include U.S. support of the Shah of Iran until 1979, an alliance with South Korea during its dictatorial period in the 1950s through the early 1980s, and the current close U.S.-Saudi relations, reaffirmed by a bilateral relationship declaration in March 2014.⁴⁸

Economy ("A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity"), like *Security* is fundamentally tied to the preservation of the nation and its institutions.⁴⁹ Rotberg loosely defines the economic criteria for assessing state strength or weakness based on the ability to deliver the political good associated with "the arteries of commerce; communications infrastructures; a money and banking system, usually presided over by a central bank and lubricated by a national currency; a beneficent fiscal and institutional context within which citizens can pursue personal entrepreneurial goals and potentially prosper."⁵⁰ Economic subsistence is also identified as an "Irreducible National Interest," meaning that at the most basic level governments must provide or establish an environment that sustains their citizens.⁵¹ Given the rise of globalization in the modern

world, the high U.S. standard of living, and the size of the U.S. economy this criteria reasonably extends beyond the domestic description provided to encompass the international economic system.

The *Economy* National Interest, again like *Security*, is closely tied to the way the U.S. developed over its over 230 year history. Beginning as colonies, we were first a trading nation, and economic concerns lie at the heart of both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.⁵² The U.S.'s first treaty not only formed an alliance with France, but established trade and commerce; and the first military conflict authorized by Congress was started over commercial shipping in the Mediterranean Sea.⁵³ The theme of economic interests extends through U.S. history to the modern era. Since the Reagan Administration's first NSS in 1987, economic growth, prosperity, and open international trade have been an identified National Interest. When compared to the definition provided, *Economy* clearly rises to the interest intensity level threshold for both "Vital National Interests" and "Extremely Important National Interests" as it relates to the viability and stability of global trade and financial markets; additionally this National Interest addresses several of the "top strategic risks" outlined by the Obama Administration.⁵⁴ Pursuit of the *Economy* National Interest has led the U.S. to enter into trade agreements with many countries that do not share U.S. values. In 2009, the U.S. signed a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) solidifying a close relationship, and established an U.S. Ambassadorship to the organization.⁵⁵ However, several ASEAN members are known to have poor human rights records.⁵⁶

Where the *Security* and *Economy* National Interests are the principle goals that the U.S. seeks, *International Order* represents the condition necessary to pursue them; it is the environment required for the U.S. to be prosperous and safe in the 21st Century. So, *International Order* (A rules based international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges) while still a National Interest, differs from the *Security* and *Economy* in that it is ways-based rather than ends-based. Although it is a complementary or supporting factor, it still meets the intensity threshold to be considered at least an “Extremely Important National Interest.”⁵⁷ The U.S. has always sought the conditions that allow the pursuit of its security and economic interests. Prior to technological advances that allowed intercontinental power projection, the precursor to the *International Order* National Interest was the “Balance of Power;” specifically, a European Balance of Power.⁵⁸

Morgenthau proposes that early American Statesmen understood that as long as the balance of power in Europe was maintained, the U.S. generally had freedom of action. For this reason, the American foreign policy alternatively supported the weaker faction to maintain the balance.⁵⁹ Therefore the U.S. used this ways-based Interest to set conditions to support its ends. With the end of the Second World War ushering in the Nuclear Age, and the formation of both collective security (NATO, Warsaw Pact) and international cooperative organizations (e.g., U.N.), the U.S. could no longer just concern itself with maintaining a European balance of power. Instead, its attention transitioned to maintaining a global balance between capitalist and communist nations.

Within this context, the U.S. National Interest in a rules-based International Order emerged.

As a complementary National Interest, *International Order* consistently aligns with *Security* and *Economy*, acting as the vehicle through which these interests are achieved. While the U.S. maintains the right to conduct unilateral operations when its “enduring interests demand it: when our people are threatened; when our livelihoods are at stake; and when the security of our allies is in danger,” it rarely does, preferring instead to operate in a cooperative system.⁶⁰

Like *International Order*, *Universal Values* (respect for universal values at home and around the world) is not an end or objective unto itself. In its current form, it is a means-based National Interest inherited from the Bush Administration that does not align with the ends outlined in the 2015 NSS.⁶¹ This inconsistency affects U.S. credibility by causing friction between Universal Values and the other *National Interests*.

To understand the sources of this conflict, it is necessary to briefly examine the origins of the *Universal Values* National Interest. Although the ideals espoused within it (i.e., people’s right to self-determination, personal freedoms, rule of law) are clearly American, their promotion internationally is not. Moreover, previous U.S. attempts to implement a values-based or moralist foreign policy proved to be both ineffective and dangerous.⁶²

Unlike *Security*, *Economy*, and *International Order*, which are consistent with historic U.S. foreign policy goals and actions, *Universal Values*, in its current form, is a relatively new National Interest. Values and democracy promotion, in some form, are referenced in all NSS’s, but the initiative to use them as a means did not emerge until

the Clinton Administration's introduction of "Democratic Enlargement" to consolidate market access.⁶³ The George W. Bush Administration then transitioned the promotion of liberal democracy into a means aimed at justifying interventionist policies and combat terrorism as part of the "War of Ideas."⁶⁴ Subordinate strategies adopted this position, translating into policy.⁶⁵ While application of values in this instance was successful in attaining the ends outlined by Bush's administration, i.e., combating global terrorism, its use seemed to be more for justification than as a criteria for decision-making. Judgment of that policy aside, this effort did synchronize Bush's stated National Interests and policies, and was consistent with U.S. actions at the time.

Given the Obama Administration's more pragmatic, and less interventionist, approach to foreign policy, inclusion of *Universal Values* is out of place. The examples presented above validate the assertion that the *Security* and *Economy* National Interests consistently rise to a much higher level of interest intensity than *Universal Values*, which is a "Less Important Interest," at best.⁶⁶ The U.S. extraterritorial detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba serves is perhaps the most glaring example of this Interest conflict. U.S. credibility is severely damaged when we profess "respect for universal values at home and around the world," and still maintain this facility. Compounding this issue, the aforementioned relationships with Saudi Arabia and Israel in the Middle East, and Thailand, Burma, and the Philippines in Asia calls U.S. commitment to Universal Values into question. Each of these nations is a key security or economic partner in strategically important region, and each is a documented violators of human rights.⁶⁷ These inconsistencies between strategy and action are not merely past events or lingering relationships; rather, they are active and

evolving policies. Two contemporary examples are the ongoing U.S. – Iranian Nuclear Negotiations, and the resumption of military sales and aid to Egypt.⁶⁸

The purpose of this paper is not to condemn U.S. policy or action supporting our *Security* and *Economy* National Interests, rather it is to make the case that *Universal Values* should not be included as a National Interest in the NSS. As shown above, *Universal Values* consistently carries little weight in policy formulation situations, and when taken as the sole National Interest justification it fails to meet the threshold for consistent or sustained action. Historical examples of this point include the U.S. decisions not to intervene in Rwanda in 1994 or Darfur in 2003, and the controversy over U.S. participation in Libya in 2011. Arguably, the only U.S. Interest affected by the Gaddafi Regime's attacks on the Libyan people was *Universal Values*. As such, the U.S. led coalition to stop the attacks (OPERATION ODYSSEY DAWN) for less than two weeks, before quickly transitioning control to NATO partners, and moving into a supporting role (OPERATION UNIFIED PROTECTOR). This is indicative of the lack of U.S. willingness to act, let alone conduct unilateral operations, when the only National Interest impacted is *Universal Values*.⁶⁹ Given the demonstrated weakness of the *Universal Values* National Interest and the potential negative effect it has on U.S. credibility, a recommendation of replacing it with a *Stability* National Interest (conditions of predictive regularity in key regions that enhances U.S. security and enables U.S. economic prosperity) is presented below.

Although the adoption of *Stability* is a change from the current NSS, it is by no means a new National Interest. The intention of the Monroe Doctrine was as much about stability in the Western Hemisphere, as it was about U.S. economic policy and

security from European aggression.⁷⁰ Likewise, Ronald Reagan's first NSS in 1987 addressed both "A stable and secure world, free of major threats to U.S. Interests," and "...free market economies throughout the world, linked by fair and open international trading system."⁷¹ Additionally, *Stability*, as defined above, is categorized as an "Extremely Important National Interest" in that it would "Promote the acceptance of international rules of law and mechanisms for resolving or managing disputes peacefully," and "Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in important regions, especially the Persian Gulf."

The *Stability* National Interest, similar to *Universal Values* that it would replace, would be a means-based interest intended to set conditions favorable to *Security* and *Economy* and pursued within the context of *International Order*. Taken together, these National Interests would work in parallel to facilitate ends, ways, and means alignment that is currently missing. Additionally, because the NSS sits at the top of a strategy and policy hierarchy, adoption of *Stability*, along with the recommended removal of *Universal Values*, this alignment would have a cascading effect across all U.S. strategic guidance and policy.

Additionally *Stability* better represents the practical foreign policy actions implemented by the Obama Administration by creating opportunities rather than barriers. Where *Universal Values* demands ultimatums, e.g., establishment of redlines regarding Syrian chemical weapons use, *Stability* allows for options, like negotiations with a rising hegemon in a key region over for the controlled use of nuclear energy. So, working toward the *Stability National Interest* mandates engagement of all stakeholders rather than their condemnation and alienation. Referring to the examples previously

used and applying the *Stability* rather than *Universal Values*, it is reasonable and appropriate that the U.S. has established relations in the Asian Pacific Region and the Middle East with all relevant actors, not just the ones with which we are likeminded. It also provides reason and context to the support of Egypt in their efforts to combat terrorism in Yemen; and while it cannot justify maintenance of the Guantanamo Bay prison, it removes the stigma of hypocrisy that affects U.S. credibility. Although the outcome in each of the instances discussed above may be the same regardless of whether *Stability* or *Universal Values* is the driver, the message sent by those actions is very different.

Adoption of the *Stability* National Interest is by no means an attempt to remove traditional U.S. values, ethics, or morals from the strategy and policy formulation process. Those values remain the foundation of the “National Purpose” that informs U.S. National Interests, “Enduring values and beliefs embodied in the national purpose represent the legal, philosophical, and moral basis for continuation of the American system.”⁷² Instead, replacement of *Universal Values* with *Stability* provides consistency and alignment of national strategy documents, foreign policy, and actions based in our values, not in conflict with them.

U.S. National Interests provide purpose and clarity for policymakers, and strategic communication to allies and adversaries. They sit at the top of the U.S. strategy and policy formulation hierarchy, informing and guiding policy development and implementation on an ongoing basis. As such, it is critical that our National Interests are both complementary in their alignment with our National Purpose, and synergistic in linking Ends, Ways, and Means. The current inconsistency created by the inclusion of

Universal Values (“Respect for universal values at home and around the world.”) negatively effects U.S. credibility by undermining our other National Interests, while simultaneously seeking to merely justify previous policies.⁷³ Additionally, its utility in policy formulation is suspect because *Universal Values* rise to an interest intensity level warranting action. Revision of the NSS, and replacement of Universal Values with *Stability* (“The conditions of predictive regularity in key regions that enhances U.S. security and enables U.S. economic prosperity.”) completes the alignment of strategy, interests, and policy, and restore credibility to U.S. policy formulation practices.

Endnotes

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