National Security Strategy: A Toolkit for Assessing State Preparedness to Combat Global Security Threats That Endanger National Security in the 21st Century

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Abstract

With reliance on qualitative secondary research, emphasizing content or textual analysis, this article introduced national security strategy as a toolkit for assessing state preparedness to combat global security threats that endanger national security in the 21st century.

Through the lenses of the social contract theory, realist theory, and alliance theory, this paper viewed state preparedness as a legal and moral obligation of the state. It argues that the national security strategy is the viable and available starting point to assess states' preparedness to counter global security threats posing a danger to national security in the 21st century.

Conclusively, the paper opined that the national security strategy merely demonstrates the expressed commitment of states' preparedness. The implementation of the strategy will prove or disprove the preparedness of the state's expressed commitment.

Keywords: *Global Security threats, National Security Strategy, National Security Policy, National Security, State Preparedness*

Introduction

After the deadly impact of the 9/11 attack on the United States, which shocked the moral conscience world, states have increased their readiness to combat not only terrorism, considered one of the traditional global security threats but also other emerging national security threats of the 21st century. In light of this, what would provide a satisfactory response to a research inquiry aimed at evaluating the preparedness efforts carried out by states? In other words, if we want to evaluate the preparedness of states to address global security threats in the 21st century that endanger national security, what tools or methods can we use to assess their preparedness? There are various toolkits and methodological approaches available, but the existence of these tools does not prevent the development of new reliable toolkits. The reason for introducing a new toolkit is that everything we read and apply in

academic settings is the result of research and creativity from scholars and experts. Additionally, the introduction of a new idea may be prompted by research gaps uncovered in the work of others. In this article, a new toolkit is introduced to assess states' preparedness to combat global security threats of the 21st century that national security of the 21st century. The article is divided into four segments. The first segment discusses the theoretical framework supporting or justifying states' preparedness to combat global security threats. The second segment clarifies three key concepts: national security, states' preparedness, and global security threats of the 21st century, with a focus on global terrorism, cyber threats, organized crime, conflicts between states, pandemics, epidemics, and climate change. The third segment outlines the toolkit, and the final segment presents the conclusion.

Methodological Outline and Materials

The title of this article showcases the researcher's creativity, which would typically constitute qualitative primary research. Nevertheless, the researcher's original work is bolstered by qualitative secondary research, with a focus on content or textual analysis, commonly referred to as the literature review. This literature review constitutes the materials obtained from the internet using the Google search engine.

Contribution to Knowledge

The main essence of any scientific innovation or creativity is to contribute knowledge. Therefore, the author expects that this toolkit will be useful for adoption and serve as the foundation for further research in security studies.

Theoretical Framework

This paper employs two relevant and related theories namely the social contract theory, the realist theory, and the alliance theory. All these theories support or complement each other.

The Social Contract Theory

From an international security studies perspective, the social contract theory seems relevant. States' preparedness to combat or counter security threats of the 21st century is motivated by their legal obligations articulated by the social contract theory.

Popularized by Thomas Hobbes in his seminal essay "Leviathan" in the 17th century, the theory posits that in a state of nature, individuals would be plagued by constant fear of violent death without any governing authority. To mitigate this, they willingly enter a social contract, surrendering certain freedoms to a sovereign ruler (government) in exchange for protection and security (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946). Another influential thinker, John Locke, stressed the importance of individual rights and asserted that the social contract exists to safeguard these rights. He contended that if a government failed in this duty, individuals had the right to rebel and establish a new social contract (Main, 2023). The social contract theory places the responsibility on the government or state to protect its citizens from security threats. Locke emphasized the repercussions of neglecting domestic security and argued that citizens have the right to replace the government through popular uprising, popular sovereignty, or the ballot box if the government fails in this duty. In the 21st century, security threats pose significant challenges to citizens' rights, which governments are obligated to safeguard as per the social contract theory. Consider, for example, the threats posed by terrorism and pandemics to the fundamental right to life. As a result, states are legally bound to safeguard this right. Despite enduring criticisms of the social contract theory, it has greatly influenced modern political thought and remains pertinent in discussions on national and international security. Hence, this theory provides the rationale for states to proactively enhance their national security measures.

The Realist Theory

The traditional views of security consider the sovereign state the object of security; therefore, realist approaches maintain that state apparatuses, including the police and military, are best suited to ensuring (state) security in the face of threats (Deibert, 2018). Realist theory sees the state as the object of reference. Therefore, it is essentially a "state-centric approach" (Walt, 2017). In other words, in the contemporary era, it is about the safety of the state from traditional security threats that involve the military and now the intelligence wing or unit of the police most often referred to as "anti-terrorist division or unit". This is why Walt (1991) defines "security" as the security of the state and places particular emphasis on the preservation of the state's territorial integrity and the physical safety of its inhabitants. The author further argues that a state is thought to be secure if it can defend against or deter a hostile attack and prevent other states from compelling it to adjust its behavior in significant ways or to sacrifice core political values (Walt, 1991). Judging from Walt's assertion, it is somehow safe to infer that realists place the responsibility for security squarely on the state. That is to say, states rely on the military and police to counter terrorism which is one of the 21st-century global security threats that threaten national security. This responsibility resonates with the social contract theory that also obligates the state or government to protect its citizens and vital installations against global security threats of the 21st century that also threaten national security.

The Alliance Theory

Interestingly, as their obligation to provide security, states preparation to combat global security threats that endanger their national security is also reinforced by the alliance theory. The realist and neorealist schools of thought traditionally dominate this theory. According to this tradition, the systemic structure, structural polarity, and systemic anarchy determine the formation of alliances. In particular, the anarchy characteristic of the international system leads states to accord primacy to their security. In Wight's view, an alliance's function is to reinforce the security of the allies or promote their interests in the external world (Wight, 1978). States incapable of facing unilaterally a stronger enemy decide to cooperate with other states in the same situation in order to increase their security by massing their capabilities against security threats (Liska, 1962). Similarly, Abdullahi (2021) maintains that alliance formation is a vital tool of statecraft. It helps to enhance the capabilities of states thereby maintaining their security and survival in an anarchical international system. Alliances can be formal and informal, formal alliance is a type that nations, taking consideration of their common interests, consciously agree to enter into, such alliances clearly spell out the terms of their agreement. Alliances are sealed by formal treaties. They typically include some form of binding commitment to mutual assistance in the case of attack by a third party. Because allies expect to fight together by default, they often create standing institutions to coordinate their efforts. For example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, (NATO) is the most organized alliance in the modern world, and as such, it has developed a substantial infrastructure with the capacity to protect member

nations. It has a governing body (the North Atlantic Council), a civilian leader (the Secretary General) overseeing a civilian staff, and a complex multinational military structure with multiple layers of command.

Despite the importance of this theory in international politics especially in states' security and protection, it can also be counterproductive as it would provoke counter alliance measures. For example, one of the most talked about alliances in contemporary international relations is the China-North Korea alliance which came from the threat perception from South Korea and the US alliance.

Clarification of Important Concepts

This segment clarifies three important concepts: national security, states' preparedness, and global security threats of the 21st century,

National Security

As a top priority for every country in the world, the concept of national security encapsulates a wide range of issues, including military, law enforcement, economic, political, and social aspects that border on the protection of states' sovereignty. It is defined based on a state's national security interests. Chitadze (2023) offers a holistic and comprehensive definition. Also known as national defense, national security is the security and defense of a sovereign state, including its citizens, economy, and institutions, which is regarded as a duty of government. Originally conceived as protection against military attack, national security is widely understood to include also non-military dimensions, including security from terrorism, minimization of crime, economic security, energy security, environmental security, food security, and cyber-security.

For Kaplan (2022), national security refers to the ability of the government to utilize military force to protect its citizen's safety, economic welfare, and social institutions from the threat of attack by foreign or domestic invaders.

In the words of Holmes (2015), national security is the safekeeping of the nation as a whole. Its highest order of the protection of the nation and its people from attack and other external dangers by maintaining armed forces and guarding state secrets.

All the definitions of national security which focus on the protection and defence of state citizenry and vital installations shouldered on the state or government. Interestingly, these definitions reflect the social contract theory that sees national security as a legal obligation of the state. To ensure the operation of national security, states must embark upon preparedness and readiness. Consequently, any neglect or failure could risk the legitimacy and continuation of the social contract between the citizens and the government or state.

States' Preparedness

The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has articulated a comprehensive definition of preparedness. It defines the concept as the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, response and recovery organizations, communities, and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from the impacts of likely, imminent, or current disasters (UNDRR, 2022). UNDRR (2022) emphasizes that being prepared involves thoroughly analyzing disaster risks and establishing strong connections with early warning systems. It includes tasks such as making contingency plans, stockpiling necessary equipment and supplies, coordinating evacuation and public information efforts, and conducting relevant training and field exercises. These activities need to be backed by formal institutional, legal, and budgetary capacities.

Worthy of attention in this article is the Maryland Department of Emergency and Management (n.d.) definition of state preparedness as the ability to respond swiftly and effectively to potential hazards and threats in advance of an actual disaster.

Similarly, according to the official website of the European Union (n.d.), preparedness encompasses a series of proactive measures taken by governments, organizations, communities, or individuals to effectively respond to and manage the immediate aftermath of disasters, whether they are human-induced or caused by natural hazards. The primary goal is to minimize the loss of life and livelihoods.

In what could be viewed as a buttress to the three organizations' conceptualization, Prah and Chanimbe (2021) offer a precise clarification. They argue that a state's preparedness to tackle global security threats involves developing a precise strategy based on the context, trend, situation, and nature of the threats. Interestingly, states' preparedness reflects the social contract theory that views preparedness as a legal obligation. Consequently, any failure resulting in huge or severe casualties could question the legitimacy and continuation of the social contract between the citizens and the government or state.

In this article, the preparedness concepts outlined by UNDRR, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management, and the European Union are relevant despite being generic. It is undeniable that a state's readiness to address 21st-century security threats that endanger their national security, which are considered equivalent to risks and disasters, encompasses all the strategies and proactive measures outlined by these organizations.

It is interesting to point out that the primary goal of states' preparedness articulated by the European Union is to minimize the loss of life and livelihoods. This is an acknowledgment that states' preparedness will not eliminate or prevent the loss of life. Regrettably, lives will be lost. What matters most is the extent of the casualty (ies).

Conclusively, besides Prah and Chanimbe conceptualization, which is precise regarding strategy, the organizations' conceptualization of states' preparedness seems extremely generic. However, they are sensible.

Global Security Threats of the 21st Century

Global security threats of the 21st Century are multifacetedly documented by a lot of researchers and authors perceived to be context driven. For instance, in his eloquent paper, Shivane (2023) contends that the national security of the 21st century is threatened by global security threats that have transcended traditional military conflicts. They now encompass various challenges, including terrorism, cyber threats, water and energy shortages, pandemics, climate change, economic vulnerabilities, education-employment mismatch, and technology disparities. Similarly, Wyrębek (2022) posits that nowadays a growing number of non-military threats appear in the security environment and their significance and impact are much greater on national security than in the past. These complex risks require nations' focused attention and effective responses, underscoring the critical need for preparedness.

The Rowan University (2024) website provides a catalog of global security threats ranging from environmental threats, transnational organized crime, health security, international migration, gender-based violence, poverty, energy and infrastructure, populism, misinformation, and extremism.

As for Garda and Murillo (2021), they identified terrorism, pandemics, illegal migration, and drug trafficking to be among the 21st-century global security threats.

Nuclear proliferation remains one of the most pressing global security threats, with profound implications for international stability and peace. The spread of nuclear weapons and technology to more countries, and potentially non-state actors, heightens the risk of nuclear conflict, whether intentional or accidental continues to raise global alarm (Shahid, 2023, UN, 2024).

Despite the slight variance observed in the different catalogs of the 21st century global security threats pinpointed by various authors, what is important to flag is the commonalities shared by all the authors such as terrorism, transnational organized crimes such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering, cyber threats, climate change, pandemics, nuclear proliferation. All these threats pose significant threats to national security across cultures in the 21st century. If a country's threat is not poverty, it could be cyber security or terrorism.

National Security Policy

The NSP provides a general description of the security priorities and objectives of a state or country.

According to the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, a national security policy is an official description of how a state aims to provide for its own security and that of its population. It establishes a national understanding of the threats and risks of the security environment and the values and principles that will guide the state in providing state and human security. It is intended to provide an overarching national vision as the basis for the development of other documents such as a national security strategy or subsector plan (DCAF, 2015).

The NSP could be the first starting point for assessing state preparedness to combat global security threats that have the propensity to endanger the national security of any state. In other words, first and foremost, the assessor must begin with the perusal of the NSP that demonstrates or indicates the expressed commitment to state preparedness. However, the NSP may not exist for all countries. In almost all countries, only the NSS is available. In others, both the NSP and NSS exist. When such is the case, it could mean that the NSP contains relevant strategies to implement the NSP. Take the case of the current NSPs of Sierra Leone and the Philippines already mentioned in this paper, their respective NSPs contain relevant strategies for implementation. Similarly, Pakistan does not have an NSS. Instead, it has an NSP dated 2022-2026 that also contains relevant strategies for implementation (National Security Policy of Pakistan, 2022-2026).

National Security Strategy

To assess states' preparedness to combat global security threats that endanger their national security, the second starting point would be the examination of the national security strategy (NSS) provided the availability of an NSP. In the absence of an NSP, then the NSS would be the first starting point. Generally, the NSS is an official and holistic document prepared periodically by the

executive branch of every government saddled with the legal obligation to provide security for the state. It describes how the objectives may be achieved through the use of a government's power apparatus. The main essence of the NSS is to provide a blueprint to implement the NSP. It lays out the blueprint for implementing the NSP.

In many countries, national security policies or strategies are determined by a National Security Council (NSC) structure which is the highest decision-making body. As the primary duty of the Executive Branch of Government, the NSC is most often chaired by the President or Chief Executive Bearne et al.,2005). Also, the parliament generally provides oversight for NSP/NSS and financial matters related to the use of security institutions in the application of NSP/NSS (Boucher, 2009).

This document captures the national security concerns, priorities, and how the government plans to address the concerns or problems. The concerns encapsulate the threats and challenges standing in the way of combating the threats. The priorities are extremely strategic to the national interest of the state. So, in this context, the NSS becomes the blueprint for states to protect their sovereignty and all their citizens from Internal and external threats, natural hazards, and climate change, which can never be sufficiently prepared to deal with as a nation. In other words, the NSS is a tool to help states respond to these threats to protect their people, land, Government and institutions, oceans, and air space. Therefore, in an attempt to conduct or carry out the assessment of states' preparedness to combat global security threats of the 21st century, certain key and general elements contained in the NSS that resonate with all states should captivate the attention of the assessor or researcher. See below

The NSS must be Current and living Document

No state operates with obsolete NSS and NSP. By obsolete, it means the current NSS must not be more than 5 years old. It must be current within the constitutional term limits of the government. In most instances, the NSS is sanctioned between 4-5 years by relevant bodies, precisely the Executive and Legislature or Parliament depending on the state arrangement. More importantly, the NSS must be subject to reviews and updating (flexible) because of the evolving nature of globalization as it relates to the intricacy and complexity of traditional and non-traditional security threats. The incumbent government must review or update the NSS to ensure alignment with its security agenda. For example, the current NSS for Nigeria dates far back to 1999 under the leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo, revised in 2014 under the administration of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and last updated in 2019 under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari. It is what the incumbent government under the Tinubu administration is now using as the blueprint to protect Nigeria (Ojielo, 2023). Similarly, the current NSS of Sierra Leone was officially launched as the first National Security Policy and Strategy (NSPS) in 2024 (Will, 2024). On 6th September 2024, the Government of Solomon Island commenced the consultation that would review and revise their NSS of 2020 (Solomon Island Government, 2024). The consultation suggests that the NSS is nearing expiration or outdatedness.

South Africa NSS emerged in 1994 Under the Nelson Mandela administration, was reviewed by the Jacob Zuma administration in

2013, and the current NSS was proposed in 2022 under the Ramaphosa administration (Duncan, 2022).

Philippines NSP as it is titled dates 2023-2028. This current NSP is the third national security policy document crafted in response to modern-day challenges confronting the Philippines in a rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain world (Philippines National Security Policy, 2023). The United States' current NSS is 2022 bearing the signature of Joseph R. Biden Jr (The White House, 2022)

The current NSS for Sweden bearing the name of the Prime Minister dates 2024 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024).

The example from Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the Solomon Island Government, the Philippines, the United States, and Sweden theoretically demonstrates their preparedness to combat global security threats posing a danger to their national security.

In Liberia's case, the current NSS was last endorsed in 2008 under the Ellen Johnson administration. By calculation, it is obsolete (16 years old). Until Liberia can approve a revised NSS cognizance of the evolving nature of globalization as it relates to the intricacy and complexity of traditional and non-traditional security threats, it is far from preparation.

Mission, Vision, Objectives/Purpose of the NSS

Despite slight variations, these are essential and uncompromising embodiments of all NSS. In other words, no NSS exists without these embodiments (vision, mission, purpose/objectives). These embodiments must reflect and take cognizance of the state's national interest. Each must be clearly defined and contextualized. For example, the generic purpose of all NSS which is inarguable is to protect states' sovereignty and all their citizens from Internal and external threats.

The assessor should be conscious of how realistic and achievable these essential embodiments are. This is because some of these embodiments could be highly ambitious.

Definition of National Security and Threats

Again, these are another essential embodiment of all NSS. Every NSS has its own definition of the concept of national security and what it considers as national security threats. For example, the NSS of Solomon Island defines national security as "the safety, peace, and order of the nation including all its islands, oceans, air space, people, government, institutions, powers, and Constitution" (Solomon Island Government, 2024), Sierra Leone NSP situate the definition of its national security in the context of the Section 5(2) b of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. In verbatim, it states, "the protection of the state and the welfare of its citizens constitute the main elements of Sierra Leone's national security" (Republic of Sierra Leone, 2024). Although expired, Liberia NSS defines national security as "the process of 'ensuring the protection of all of Liberia's citizens, its sovereignty, its culture, its territorial integrity, and its economic wellbeing" (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia, 2008).

The United States NSS defines national security- "to protect the security of the American people; to expand economic prosperity and opportunity; and to realize and defend the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life" (The White House, 2022).

Despite the slight variance that will be observed in the various definitions of national security, the assessor must be able to discern the implied rootedness of the national interest of the state.

On the side of threats, the assessor must not only identify peculiar national security threats that are internal. Attention must be drawn to global security threats posing a danger to national security. For instance, terrorism, climate change, pandemics, cybercrimes, and transnational organized crime such as illicit financial flow and money laundering, drug, and human trafficking, the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), as well as the proliferation of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive, should cut across all NSS. These are external threats. In other words, it is impractical for an NSS to exist without cognizance of these external threats that also include regional threats as well.

Specific Course of Actions

Put simply, a strategy is defined as a specific course of action that theoretically influences achievement. This is one of the most important embodiments of all NSS that must captivate the critical attention of the assessor. It explains what a state will do to implement the NSS. Generally, a well-defined specific course of action of the NSS should factor in the following not limited to relevant institutions with specific mandates or responsibilities, legislations, capacity building of relevant security and intelligence agencies, including logistics. The assessor must also take into consideration the health and disaster sectors responsible for dealing with pandemics and natural disasters; cooperation, or alliance with other states to address shared challenges, coordination plans, and building response and recovery resilience.

Role of Relevant Actors

In dissecting the NSS, the assessor must not escape the role of each relevant actor. This is because the NSS defines the role of each national actor in dealing with national security needs to determine processes (and chain of command) for making decisions when the response to threats or crises is required and delineate conditions for using security forces. More importantly, the attention of the assessor must be drawn to the National Security Council (NSC) structure. In most countries, the NSC can be either advisory or executive in nature (Bearne et al., 2005). Generally, the main actors devising the NSS will include the Chief Executive or President, the Ministries of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Finance, the National Security Advisor, senior military officials, senior intelligence and law enforcement officials, the health ministry, and the Director of Disaster agency. The NSC, as both a developer of the NSS and an oversight body, can also help to maintain the integrity of security sector policymaking and manage policy implementation (Kinzelback and Cole, 2006).

Implementation of the NSS

The NSS is merely an expressed commitment of government preparedness to confront or deal with global security threats endangering the national security of the 21st century. In other words, it is just a document or a series of documents (defense policy, white paper, national domestic security strategy) describing the requirements for the implementation of a national security policy (Ouedraogo,2017). Therefore, the implementation of the NSS/NSP essentially speaks volumes of states' preparedness. For example, if the NSS/NSP outlines or contains capacity building of personnel and provision of requisite logistics to combat global

terrorism, the assessor should be able to determine how far the state has gone with this strategy. To prove its seriousness for preparedness, a state must demonstrate its commitment by mobilizing the resources or providing the funds to ensure the implementation of this strategy geared toward preparedness to combat global terrorism. For example, to counter global terrorism, the US Bureau of Counterterrorism strategies include building law enforcement and judicial capabilities to mitigate attacks, disrupt terrorist transit, and arrest, investigate, prosecute, and incarcerate terrorists in accordance with the rule of law (US Department of State, n.d.)

What if the NSS/NPS also recommends cooperation or alliance with other states to fight cyberattacks, the assessor must be able to determine how far or to what extent the state has gone. For example, in 2021, Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S. through cooperation or coalition called "Quad" have pledged to work together to combat cyber threats, promote resilience, and secure their critical infrastructures (Starks, 2021).

Conclusion

The inherent or implied aim of this paper was to introduce the national security strategy as a toolkit for assessing a state's preparedness to combat global security threats that endanger the national security of the 21st century. Of course, the exploration or articulation of the subject proves the attainment of the aim of this paper.

The theoretical framework (social contract theory, realist theory, and alliance theory) which provided the foundation for the crux of the argument advanced in this paper viewed the state's preparedness to counter global security threats not only as a legal obligation but also moral as well as.

The crux of the argument is that the NSS/NSP is merely a paper or document demonstrating the expressed commitment to state preparedness. The implementation of the strategies will prove or disprove the preparedness of the state's expressed commitment.

Finally, this toolkit does not exhaust all the thematic areas for the assessment. Therefore, another research could be used to further or transcend the knowledge of the author.

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