

National Security Strategy: Where Is Climate Headed?

Allin Mohana Biswas¹

Introduction

The White House had unveiled the National Security Strategy (NSS) on October 2022 of the Biden administration which is a 360-degree strategy containing its plans on building the United States (U.S.) by focusing on global cooperation, fostering domestic growth, and tackling ‘transnational challenges’ like climate change, food security, and infectious diseases.

After taking office, President Biden and his national security team has termed climate change as an “existential threat” to the United States and the world. The National Security Strategy is a document that provides a narrative for the American people and the world that forms viewpoints, influences strategic decisions and resource allocation. Climate change is no longer a soft security issue but a direct threat.

Climate security

Rising temperatures lead to serious impacts on food, water, energy, infrastructure, forced migration, public health, and national security. Scientists warn that if no rapid worldwide action is taken to stop emissions, global temperatures could soon increase up to 1.5 degrees, resulting in more severe weather, rising sea levels, and a devastating loss of species. The concept of conflict over natural resources has long been ongoing, especially concerning water and oil; conflict related to climate change has long remained a relatively unclear topic. The climate crisis is now more evident than ever.

The strategy puts focus on starting global action at home, along with putting enormous generational resources into clean energy, boosting American companies and producing millions of well-paying jobs at the same time. The National Security Strategy highlighted that

¹ Allin Mohana Biswas is working as a Research Intern at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies.

investing in climate security at the domestic level was important, for other countries to follow along with them.

After winning the election in November 2020, President Joe Biden officially joined the Paris Agreement. The strategy brought a spotlight upon global cooperation by supporting nations in meeting and strengthening their own nationally determined contributions, reducing emissions, addressing methane and other super pollutants, promoting carbon dioxide removals, adapting to the most severe effects of climate change, and putting an end to deforestation over the next ten years by building on the Leaders' Summit on Climate, Major Economies Forum, and Paris Agreement process.

The United States is focusing on transitioning to green and clean energy of wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, bioenergy and nuclear energy. Since the United States is one of the leading countries in terms of renewable energy use, it believes that other countries will follow in their footsteps. In all areas of climate change policy, adaptation and mitigation should be viewed as complements rather than competing alternatives. The National Security Strategy put focus on building Federal, state, and local mitigation and resilience efforts by integrating climate change into the national security planning and policies.

How is Bangladesh linked to the National Security Strategy?

The United States has highlighted that many low-income and lower-middle income countries need assistance, especially for mitigation and adaptation efforts. The United States has aimed to provide over \$11 billion in annual climate funding to climate vulnerable countries. But, how much of it is actually going to Bangladesh?

The United States carries out its international development program through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID remains committed to supporting Bangladesh on its journey to becoming an upper middle-income country by 2031. It works on climate security in Bangladesh through their 'Environment, Energy, Climate Resilience' sector.



Source: U.S. Embassy in Bangladesh

To prevent the destruction of crucial biodiversity areas in Bangladesh, a new five-year program with a budget of \$20.5 million from USAID called *Ecosystems/Protibesh* was created. The Sundarbans mangrove forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site and home to the Royal Bengal tiger, as well as the forest and freshwater wetland ecosystems of the Sylhet border region in northeastern Bangladesh are the focus of the initiative. By adopting climate-smart agricultural practices and gaining business skills to diversify and enhance their incomes, communities will be assisted in building long-term climate resilience while reducing their dependency on forest resources for their livelihood.

In order to safeguard and sustainably manage Bangladesh's bio-diverse landscapes and ecosystems, USAID has collaborated with the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and local community leaders. This cooperation is built upon in the new Protibesh program. Protibesh will be locally led by community members and GOB counterparts, including the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Land, and the Bangladesh Forest Department. It will draw on lessons learned from previous interventions to strengthen environmental governance and sustainable forest and wetland management.

Bangladesh will be able to combat the effects of climate change, protect the nation's vital natural resources and increase its resilience to natural disasters brought on by climate change as a result of Protibesh conservation, as well as climate adaptation and mitigation activities.

Energy, food and Arctic security

Climate change is causing uncertainty in energy and food security. Along with that, the Arctic region has also become a cause of concern. The National Security Strategy addressed the implications to energy, food and Arctic security due to climate change.

Energy security: The United States had an agreement on steel with the European Union, which is the first-ever agreement on steel and aluminum to address both global overcapacity and carbon intensity, and serves as a template for future climate-focused trade procedures. Additionally, the U.S. has stopped public funding for coal power and mobilizing funds to quicken investments in adaptation and the energy transition. The urgent need to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels has been made evident by incidents like Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Clean energy is essential for long-term energy security.

The United States understands the importance of collaborating with allies and partners to guarantee energy affordability and security, protect access to vital mineral supply chains, and provide a fair transition for employees. The NSS has highlighted collaborative work in the International Energy Agency, the U.S.-EU Task Force on European Energy Security, the Clean Energy Ministerial and Mission Innovation, Power Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, the Partnership for Transatlantic Energy and Climate Cooperation, the U.S. believes they will drive concrete action to achieve an energy secure future.

Food security: The invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the COVID-19 pandemic's economic effects, climatic events, and prolonged conflicts are just a few of the factors threatening the world's food systems today. Together, they threaten to send 75–95 million more people into extreme poverty by 2022 than were anticipated before the pandemic. Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which forced a large amount of Ukraine's grain off the market and worsened a problem of growing global food insecurity, has made the food insecurity dilemma extremely serious. The United States is offering more humanitarian aid than ever before to help the hundreds of millions of people who are currently suffering. They continue to be the biggest

donor to the World Food Programme and to almost every nation that is going through a humanitarian food crisis.

Achieving global food security requires constant vigilance and action by all governments, in collaboration with multilateral institutions and non-governmental organizations. Over the longer term, the country is assisting the world to find ways to deal with the broad set of challenges for the world's food supply. Working with partners, they have come up with the Roadmap for Global Food Security: A Call to Action, which urges the more than 100 nations to take a number of steps, such as maintaining open agricultural and food markets, increasing fertilizer production, and funding climate-resilient agriculture.

The United States is also putting into action the Global Food Security Strategy, which aims to reduce hunger, poverty, and malnutrition by promoting inclusive and sustainable agricultural economic growth, enhancing resilience among people and food systems, and promoting healthy, well-nourished populations, particularly among women and children. This advocates for tackling whole food systems, taking into account each stage from production to consumption, and integrating these efforts into broader initiatives to address the environment, human health, conflict resolution, and peace building. By putting equality and inclusion at the front and collaborating with both domestic and foreign partners, these initiatives can be made to be long-lasting and sustainable. The United States must continue to meet urgent needs while also collaborating to create long-term, sustainable food security.

Arctic security: Since the Arctic is warming four times faster than the rest of the world, the rapid evolution of the Arctic environment is quickly becoming a key area of focus for the U.S. both militarily and diplomatically. Russia has the longest Arctic coastline of any Arctic nation, and China has declared itself a near-Arctic state. According to the U.S., the Arctic area should be peaceful, stable, prosperous, and cooperative. Arctic communities and key ecosystems are under threat due to climate change. Over the past ten years, Russia has made enormous investments in its Arctic presence, updating its military infrastructure and increasing the pace of drills and training missions. As a result of Russia's aggressive actions, there are now greater geopolitical risks of unexpected confrontation in the Arctic, which makes collaboration more difficult. China has also made an effort to strengthen its position in the Arctic by investing more money, pursuing new scientific endeavors, and exploiting this knowledge for military or intelligence purposes. In order to be ready for greater foreign activity in the area, the U.S. will

maintain security in the area by enhancing marine domain awareness, communications, disaster response capabilities, and icebreaking capacity.

In spite of the obstacles to Arctic cooperation posed by Russia's war in Ukraine, the NSS has addressed the need to deepen cooperation with Arctic allies and partners and work with them to sustain the Arctic Council and other Arctic institutions. Arctic nations have the primary responsibility for addressing regional challenges. With that, the NSS reflects the need to increase the region's adaptability to climate change and mitigate its effects, particularly through agreements to limit emissions and more Arctic scientific cooperation.

Conclusion

The National Security Strategy highlights the importance of investment into climate security and integrating climate into national policy. But, how much actually is followed through? Countries like Bangladesh who are prone to climate change face imminent danger. Regional partnerships with countries need to be made stronger. Countries also need to strengthen their own infrastructure and invest into adaptation and resilience. State actors and non-state actors involving the government, corporations, financial institutions, NGOs, and international organizations need to be accounted for when policy measures are taken.

Bibliography

Bang, G. (2010). Energy security and climate change concerns: Triggers for energy policy change in the United States?. *Energy policy*, 38(4), 1645-1653.

Busby, J. W., & Busby, J. (2007). *Climate change and national security: an agenda for action* (No. 32). Council on Foreign Relations Press.

Campbell, K. M., & Parthemore, C. (2008). National security and climate change in perspective. *Climatic Cataclysm: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Climate Change*, 1-25.

Biden-Harris Administration's national security strategy. (n.d.).

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

A central role for climate change in the new U.S. National Security Strategy. Lawfare. (2022, November 1). <https://www.lawfareblog.com/central-role-climate-change-new-us-national-security-strategy>

USAID launches new \$20.5 million climate change and environmental conservation activity in Bangladesh to protect wildlife, Forests, and livelihood: Press release. U.S. Agency for International Development. (2022, May 12). <https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/press-releases/may-12-2022-usaid-launches-new-205-million-climate-change-and-environmental>

Posted By Jessica Olcott Yllemo on Oct 28, and Yllemo, J. O. (n.d.). *Climate and the 2022 national defense strategy*. American Security Project.

<https://www.americansecurityproject.org/climate-and-the-2022-national-defense-strategy/>