

US 2006 National Security Strategy: Peter Feaver's Influence

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Abstract: This article observes original ideas of Peter Feaver about public support of war elaborated independently and regardless of Government position. The survey determines whether his ideas influenced the US official National Security Strategy (NSS) 2006 that had been developed in the time when US public attitude toward Iraq and Afghanistan wars was significantly important and, if they did, how significant their impact was. In order to answer these questions, the article compares the text of 2006 National Security Strategy with Peter Feaver's working papers and written statements.

Key words: Peter Feaver • National Security Strategy • Public support • Use of force

INTRODUCTION

The September 11th attacks caused a firm, grim and large-scale reaction from the only superpower in the world-the United States of America. After the act of terror, the US proclaimed proactive and assertive defense against future threats including terrorism, spread of nuclear weapons and tyranny. In the frames of the new active defense strategy, Washington started military operations on two battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq. It was obvious that active combat actions would inevitably cause a growing number of casualties among American soldiers and would call forth the US society to question the support of war. After George W. Bush reelection the Administration of the President had to explain the great military plans of the Government to the public via new the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS). In this regard it is interesting to find out whether the professor of Duke University Peter Feaver, whose main research issue is public support of war, had an impact on the 2006 NSS.

Peter Feaver's Ideas about Public Support of War: In order to answer the question about Peter Feaver's

influence on the National Security Strategy, it is important to study what ideas he elaborated during his academic career.

His main idea is described in the article written in collaboration with Cristopher Gelpi and Jason Reifer "Success matters: Casualty sensitivity and the war in Iraq". Investigating the Iraq experience, the authors argue that "the public is not indifferent to the human costs of American foreign policy, but casualties have not by themselves driven public attitudes toward the Iraq war and mounting casualties have not always produced a reduction in public support [1]". The experts prove their positions and come to a more general conclusion that "the public will tolerate significant numbers of U.S. combat casualties under certain circumstances. The Iraq case suggests that under the right conditions the public will continue to support military operations even when they come with a relatively high human cost. Our core argument is that the US public's tolerance for the human costs of war is primarily shaped by the intersection of two crucial attitudes: beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of the war and beliefs about a war's likely success" [2].

The same theses are proved in other Feaver's academic works "Iraq the vote: retrospective and prospective foreign policy judgments on candidate choice

¹Feaver P., 2010. A grading rubric for President Obama's national security strategy // Shadow Government. April 26, 2010. URL: http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/04/26/a_grading_rubric_for_president_obama_s_national_security_strategy P.7 (Date of access 1.06.12).

²Gelpi C., P. Feaver and J. Reifler, 2005-06. Casualty Sensitivity and the War in Iraq // Duke University. International security. Winter 2005-2006. URL: <http://www.duke.edu/~gelpi/success.matters.pdf> P.7.(Date of access 1.06.12).

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and casualty tolerance” [3] and “Let’s get a second opinion: international institutions and American public support for war” [4].

Peter Feaver’s Influence on 2006 National Security Strategy:

The proof that Peter Feaver might had an impact on the NSS 2006 can be found in the note for the Secretary of Defense from Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith. Feith mentioned in the document that thoughts on NSS would be sent to Peter Feaver as he occupied the position in National Security Council [5].

The second proof of the direct role of Peter Feaver is seen in the professor’s blog where he wrote about his principal role in 2006 NSS creation [6].

The arguments mentioned above show that Feaver did participate in NSS creation, but they say nothing about his specific impact. This question is answered when the main ideas of the National Security Strategy are compared with Peter Feaver’s ideas.

The document says, “America is at war” [7]. Therefore, the Strategy unambiguously states that United States would be acting like in wartime and combat operations would become a norm for American society.

During wartime casualties will be inevitable: “We have always known that the war on terror would require great sacrifice - and in this war, we have said farewell to some very good men and women...And our work is far from over”. This phrase of the document seems to prepare the society for the growing human costs of war, which will be paid for by the US population.

The authors of the document justify combat actions by the reason of protection from future attacks. It means that for US citizens, the unquestionable rightness and purpose of the war is for protection: “we fight our enemies abroad instead of waiting for them to arrive in our

country”. No one is interested in repeating the 9/11 catastrophe; therefore, the USA public will consider a war on terror to be fair and right. Consequently, it is seen that the first “right” condition proposed by professor Feaver for public support of war is observed in the NSS.

The second “right” condition (beliefs about a war’s likely success on the battlefield) is carefully reflected in the document as well. The following arguments can prove this thesis:

- The authors of NSS 2006 pay special attention to and take an advantage of the positive vocabulary. Careful investigation of the document shows that the terms “fight” and “war” are not used without terms “success” and “winning”. Applied to the text of NSS, content-analysis method, referring to vocabulary of political science demonstrated that terms “war” and “fight” are used 25 times while “success” and “winning’s” number is 31. This tactic is set forth deliberately in order to convince the reader of NSS to think positively and be sure that plans of the President will bring success.

Similarly to “fight” and “war”, followed by “success” and “winning”, it cannot be a fortuity that a negative “problem” was replaced by a more positive “challenge”. It was done on purpose in order to create feelings of success in future conflicts.

- Achieved success when G.Bush was on his first presidential term is described in the document whenever it is possible. Thus, Preamble says about eight tangible results of George Bush’s team [8].

³Gelpi, C., P. Feaver and J. Reifler, 2005. Iraq the vote: retrospective and prospective foreign policy judgments on candidate choice and casualty tolerance // Duke University. April 17, 2005. URL: <http://www.duke.edu/~gelpi/IraqtheVote.pdf> (Date of access 1.06.12).

⁴Gelpi, C., P. Feaver and J. Reifler, 2007. Let's get a second opinion: international institutions and american public support for war // August 2007. URL: <http://www.duke.edu/~gelpi/GGRFSecondOpinion.pdf> (Date of access 1.06.12)

⁵Note for secretary of defense [Electronic resource] // The Ramsfeld papers. August 10, 2010. URL: <http://library.rumsfeld.com/doclib/sp/3636/2005-08-10%20to%20Eric%20Edelman%20re%20National%20Security%20Strategy%20Ideas-%20Memo%20Attachment.pdf> (Date of access 15.03.12).

⁶National security strategy // White house. March 16, 2006. URL: <http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/nss2006.pdf> P.i. (Date of access: 15.05.2012).

⁷National security strategy // White house. March 16, 2006. URL: <http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/nss2006.pdf> P.i. (Date of access: 15.05.2012).

⁸National security strategy // White house. March 16, 2006. URL: <http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/nss2006.pdf> P.i. (Date of access: 15.05.2012).

Moreover the structure of the document is comprised of seven chapters; each of them consists of parts “successes” and “challenges”. “Success” has a purpose to prove that casualties that American society sacrificed in order to be protected are not in vain. It shows that the efforts of the people who were fighting had already brought tangible results and changed the situation for the better not only for Americans. For example, in the Chapter “Aspiration for human dignity” significant results are: “Afghanistan, the tyranny of the Taliban has been replaced by a freely-elected government... In Iraq, a tyrant has been toppled” [9].

The “Challenges” reminds that, regardless of achieved successes, it is early to say that the United States has overcome all obstacles on the way to its safety and security and there will be still challenges to come. This is why the Bush Administration plans a certain scheme of actions by which it will eliminate all handicaps in security issues: “Challenges” structure contains clear and concrete steps to achieve the goal. Therefore, the reader of the document is convinced of reality to attain success on the matter. Moreover, the steps themselves also contain positive dynamics to enforce the feeling that success is a reality. For example, the document says that although the North Korea represents a serious danger, there is something that can help solve the problem: “...the United States has successfully forged a consensus among key regional partners - China, Japan, Russia and the Republic of Korea (ROK) - that the DPRK must give up all of its existing nuclear programs. Regional cooperation offers the best hope for a peaceful, diplomatic resolution of this problem” [10].

CONCLUSION

The 2006 National Security Strategy was created based on Peter Feaver’s recommendations.

Firstly, the Strategy justifies the necessity to deploy military personnel abroad and use of force by the need to protect American society from existential threats. The document appeals to 9/11 terror act which is a vital example of the catastrophe Americans do not want to go through again. Then the document leads the reader to an idea that in order to be protected and prevent another catastrophe, Americans should act firmly and cope with

the problem before it reaches the US borders. Therefore, American losses incurred in military operations will be presented to Americans as a just and inevitable sacrifice, making American society believe in the rightness of the war.

Secondly, NSS pays special attention to success and the reality to achieve it in the future:

- The Strategy relies upon positive vocabulary. NSS never uses expressions “war” and “fight” without mentioning “win” and “success” at the same time. Additionally the term “problem” was replaced by the positive “challenge” in order to convince the reader of the reality of success achievement.
- The structure of the Strategy has an aim to persuade the reader in success of future operations. Each Chapter of the NSS consists of parts called “successes” and “challenges”. The “success” certifies achieved positive results. Part “challenges” is deemed to remind the reader about existing problems in security sphere. At the same time, a clear plan of actions that treats the problem as a challenge to overcome makes the reader feel that success on the matter is real.

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