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# The Military Perspective on the Strategic Planning Process in the United States within 2017–2018 Timeframe

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**Summary:** The article examines the development process of the national level security strategies in the United States. It explains the basic theory of the strategy-making, as well as the primary processes and relations among the major security enterprises. The author focuses on the 2017–2018 timeframe due to the significant changes in the U.S. legislative system and exceptional personalities involved in the strategy-making process. However, the article delivers a military perspective on strategy development. Still, it does not exclude general information on the U.S. political arena, legal framework, scope of the documents, or historical facts. These data facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the complex political-military relations during the strategy-making process. The primary purpose of the article is to analyze coherent, layered strategic planning process during President Donald Trump administration (2017–2020) and draw significant conclusions, which other countries might implement in their planning system.

**Keywords:** national defense, strategy, planning process, DIME, ends, ways, means, national power, security, grand strategy

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*Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory.  
Tactics without the strategy is the noise before defeat*

Sun Tzu

## **Introduction**

A strategy is about how nations use available power to exercise control over people, places, things, and events to achieve objectives according with their national interests and policies. The description is taken directly from the U.S. Armed Forces doctrine (Joint Doctrine 1–18, 2018). It appropriately describes the mental challenges faced by the political and military leaders, who are responsible for framing future threats and ensuring national security. That concept applies to small, underdeveloped states, as well as the global powers like the United States or China. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in the methodology and taxonomy regarding the development of national strategies. Nations also have very different levels of understanding and applying their instruments of national power (How the Army runs, 2018). However, most of them use various level strategies as reference points for further development of their diplomatic domain, building economic supremacy, and finally strengthening the military capabilities. Nations apply the strategic analysis to better understand the complexity of the future world, properly approach wicked problems, appraise their opponents' strategies, and generate more efficient solutions for their nations. Most states utilize the political level document, National Security Strategy, as the primary reference for other governmental level institutions and organizations to produce their sub-strategies.

The paper analyzes the national security strategic planning framework on the political and military level within the 2017–2018 timeframe but focuses primarily on its military perspective. During that timeframe, the U.S. administration implemented significant modifications to the national planning architecture. However, the paper does not focus on the content of the three fundamental security documents: National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense

Strategy (NDS), and National Military Strategy (NMS). Still, he analyzes the framework of national-level strategic documents, their coherent, layered legal bases, scope and structure of the documents, interrelations among strategies, and responsibilities of key stakeholders to submit conclusions for other international players. The paper comprises four sections. In the beginning, the author implements the basics of the theory on strategic studies to enhance the reader's understanding and comprehension of military strategies of the United States of America and the United States Armed Forces. Then, the paper focuses on the primary security stakeholders (actors) to portray their unique background, knowledge, and proficiency to work with the most challenging security and defense issues. Subsequently, it characterizes the three most important strategic documents (NSS, NDS, NMS) for U.S. security and defense. In the end, the paper delivers some conclusions and observations, which might be implemented in other countries.

### **Theory. DIME. Ends, Ways, Means, and Risks**

An opening definition abstracted from the Joint Doctrine Note 1–18 is not the only one and perfect description of the strategy concept. Some authors believe that word “strategy” should be used only to define war or an armed conflict environment; some of them do not refrain from applying the word “strategy” for everyday life (Baylis, Wirtz, Gray, 2016). However, the author focuses on the military approach to strategy and strategic planning process.

The most known theorist of war, Carl Clausewitz, defined strategy as “the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war” (Howard, Parret, 1989). Clausewitz's formed his definition during the anti-Napoleonic campaigns, which he experienced serving in Prussian and, subsequently, the Russian army. So, he applied the strategy from a very military perspective, and he improperly believed that military battles (engagements) are the only means to gain strategic objectives. Another Prussian military theorist, Helmut von Moltke, defined strategy in a much clearer and wiser way as a “practical

adaptation of means placed at general's disposal to the attainment of the object in view" (Vego, 2017). Moltke's definition reasonably fixed the responsibility of the military commander (general) with his allocated forces (means) to achieve goals defined by the political body – the government (ends). After more than fifty years and the two brutal, atrocious world wars, a British historian and military theorist, Henry Liddell Hart connected means and ends in his definition of strategy as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy" (Hart, 1991). Hart's meaning was very similar to the ones earlier published in the book "Makers of Modern Strategy". Their strategy was defined as "the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of the nation – or a coalition of nations – including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed" (Johnsen, Biddle, 2019). Furthermore, Liddell Hart defined the nation's "grand strategy". He explained its role in coordinating national resources of the nation, or bands of nations, towards the achievement of the political objectives of the war.

The next section emphasized the grand strategy concept in greater detail. For further consideration, the paper recommends applying the more comprehensive strategy definition, also used within the U.S. Armed Forces. The strategy is defined "as the art and science of determining a future state / condition (ends), conveying this to an audience, determining the operational approach (ways), and identifying the authorities and resources (e.g. time, forces, equipment, money, i.e. means) necessary to reach the end intended by the state, all while managing the associated risk" (Joint Publication 5–0, 2017).

Having known the basic definitions, the paper looks through it to build a better understanding of applied concepts. The U.S. Armed Forces doctrinal documents precisely describe the ends (aims, objectives), ways (concepts, methods), and means (resources), so military strategists can easily find a common platform and language to discuss and formulate strategies on different levels. The "ends" answer the question of the purpose and determine the nation's interests. According to the U.S. Armed Forces taxonomy, there are three categories of national interests: vital interests (what we are going to

die for), important interests (what we are willing to fight for), and peripheral interests (what we are willing to fund) (Joint Doctrine 1–18, 2018). The “ways” (strategic concepts) answer the question of how the strategists propose to apply available “means” to achieve desired “ends” in a very complex and competitive environment. The contemporary security environment is not as straightforward as it used to be two decades ago. The line dividing peace from war has significantly blurred recently, making the life of strategic planners much harder and ultimately challenges their minds with an environment marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Strategic Leadership, 2010). To describe that challenging reality and frame the complex spectrum of international relations blurred between peace and war, the U.S. Armed Forces started applying the three categories within the “competition continuum”. It describes the world of an enduring competition conducted through a mixture of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and finally, armed conflict. These descriptors refer to the relationship between the U.S. and other international actors (state or non-state) concerning a set of specific policy objectives (Joint Doctrine 1–19, 2019). Within the scope of international relations, nations can employ numerous ways to deal with the strategic challenges. These are defined by a broad spectrum of possible approaches starting from observation and accommodation through deterring and coercion, ending with subduing and eradicating. So, currently, the United States could peacefully cooperate with one nation on a specific issue (e.g. freedom of navigation, search and rescue, counterterrorism), and simultaneously compete below the threshold of armed conflict with the same country on a different subject (e.g. security issues, sanctions, embargo). Finally, the “means” are the capabilities and resources nations can use to achieve “ends” through the application of “ways”. “Means” are not limited to purely military assets and encompass the full spectrum on the nation’s capabilities. The acronym DIME exemplifies the instruments of national power: Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy. The responsibility of how to apply any of the DIME elements lies within different enterprises. Though, there are new approaches, such as MIDFIELD (Military, Informational,

Diplomatic, Financial, Intelligence, Economic, Law, and Development), conveying a much broader array of options for the strategists and policymaker, to employ (Joint Doctrine 1–18, 2018).

The “ends”, “ways”, and “means” construct is a preliminary place to understand the peculiar language used in the national-level strategic documents. When the instruments of national power are appropriately aligned, the strategy is sound and creates the achievable goals. To evaluate the critical segments of the strategy, the drafting team can apply the SAF-R test (WPNS Directive, 2019). The test taught in U.S. Army War College challenges the strategy paradigm by the series of thought-provoking questions and pushes military strategists to seek answers in three areas: Suitability (ends), Acceptability (ways), and Feasibility (means). Unfortunately, there is no magical, universal formula to assess every risk, because they emerged from the extensively different contexts. So, the strategist can adequately identify and mitigate possible risks, but further adjusting and moderating ends, ways or means is highly probable.

That concludes the basics of different strategies and their development process. However, for a better understanding of the overall environment, it is necessary to look into the human dimension in strategy making. Within the U.S. security domain, there are four main stakeholders: the President, the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff. In the next section, the paper briefly characterizes all four of them, their background, and internal relations.

## **The Primary Stakeholders**

After the dynamic and turbulent Presidential campaign, on January 20, 2017, Donald Trump, a former businessman and television personality, assumed office in the White House as the 45th President of the United States of America (POTUS). After the two-terms in the White House, Barrack Obama left the position, and the new administration took it over. The newly elected POTUS has only a little military experience coming from a New York Military Academy,

private boarding school he graduated from at the age of 18 in 1964. Later in college years, during the Vietnam war (1964–1975), he was four times deferred from the compulsory military draft. Due to the medical examinations, Donald Trump received the Y-1 category (“*unqualified for duty except for the national emergency*”). Later in 1972, he was finally re-classified to a 4-F category, which medically eliminated him from military service (Lee, 2016). In 1973, the conscript military service was terminated, and Donald Trump did not serve a single day within the U.S. Armed Forces (other U.S. Presidents, e.g. William Clinton and Barrack Obama also did not serve in the military). More than 40 years later, during the Presidential race to the White House, Donald Trump could not avoid the defense and military issues regarding the security of the United States and its allies all over the world. His political rivals accused him of populist claims, advocating the non-intervention policy while increasing military expenditures, demanding more military spending from allies and partners, and continually undermining the role of NATO in the contemporary world (BBC, 2018).

So, one of the first vital decisions of newly announced President on security matters was a designation of the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA), commonly referred to as a National Security Advisor. However, the first choice turned into a catastrophe. General Michael Flynn resigned from a position only after 24 days. Subsequently, President Trump picked one of the brightest and smartest U.S. officers, Lieutenant General (LTG) Henry Raymond McMaster. He was born in 1962 and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in West Point in 1984. Subsequently, he commanded different units, became a West Point professor, and led the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment during the second war with Iraq in 2004. LTG McMaster earned a Master of Arts and Ph.D. in American history. In January 2017, LTG McMaster was selected to become the National Security Adviser, but he wanted to stay in military service as an active-duty soldier. So, according to U.S. code, his nomination required U.S. Senate endorsement. After the voting in March 2017, LTG Henry McMaster officially became the National Security Adviser.

The morning of January 20, 2017 was also a new opening for the Jim “Old Dog” Mattis. Retired four-star Marine Corps general became, at this very day, the 26th Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). Similarly to LTG McMaster, also his nomination required U.S. Senate’s endorsement (Gould, Shane, 2017). Only four years younger than President Trump, General Jim Mattis had very different professional experience. He spent more than 40 years in uniform, and he was well known for his professionalism, aggressiveness, and direct approach to emerging security challenges. Jim Mattis was commissioned as a second lieutenant from the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program. He grew his entire military career within the different positions in the US Marine Corps. Finally, he led the 1st Marine Division during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Only four years later, he became the Commander of NATO’s Supreme Allied Command of Transformation (SACT). After just two years, General Mattis replaced General Petraeus as a commander of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM). He retired from military service in March 2013. The former SECDEF Leon Panetta, from Barrack Obama’s administration, heavily criticized General Mattis as “not having the maturity to look at all of the options that a president should look at to make the right decisions” (Jaffe, 2017). However, General Mattis impressed Donald Trump, who called him a “true General’s General” (Copp, 2017).

The last but the not least decisive stakeholder in security matters is a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). Born in 1955, General Joseph Dunford got his commission also from the ROTC programme and spent his military career within the Marine Corps, similarly to General Jim Mattis. During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, he served as the 5th Marine Regiment commander subordinated directly to General Mattis’ as the division commander. He earned his nickname “Fighting Joe” from that time. Then, General Dunford became the 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps. By the decision of President Obama in October 2015, General Dunford became a CJCS. After the announcement of President Trump as next POTUS, General Dunford remained on his position as CJSC till September 2019, when General Mark Milley replaced him.



The saying about “right man in the right place, and right time” could not have more relevance for the entire process of synchronizing the overall national security policy of superpower challenged by the contemporary threats in 2017. The strong personality of President Trump and inefficient understanding of security matters met the experience and profound knowledge of three highly decorated officers of the U.S. Armed Forces. Additionally, the personal relationship among the key stakeholders played a crucial role and facilitated a smooth application of strategic theories into the strategic planning process. However, the mutual understanding and common military perspective on dealing with the security challenges could hamper their more comprehensive approach to the strategic solutions. Many political commentators quoted the famous psychologist Abraham Maslow’s saying, “if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail” (Goulston, 2018). So, not long after the publication of the National Military Strategy in February 2018, the “team of four” became vulnerable for political games and started falling apart.

The next section focuses on the national-level strategies on security and defense and presents the main bulk of the research paper. It starts from the brief description of the grand strategy and goes through the NSS, the NDS, and concludes with the MNS description.

## **The Grand Strategy**

The nation’s most critical enduring beliefs, ethics, and values are known as a national purpose. They combined with existential national interests, provide nations’ grand strategy, sometimes called a strategic vision. Stephen Krasner defined the grand strategy as a “conceptual framing that describes how the world is, envisions how it ought to be, and specifies a set of policies that can achieve that ordering” (Boys, 2015). A grand strategy represents the “grand design” and presents “the overall mosaic into which the pieces of specific policy (and strategy) fit”. Grand strategy becomes a function of the “national intent” within the strategic environment. In hierarchical terms, grand strategy represents the highest level or

type of strategy. Finally, national security strategy and other types of national-level security-related strategies will serve to implement a grand strategy (Stolberg, 2012). The grand strategy not always is a written document. In most cases, the “grand strategy” is represented by the set of values, beliefs, and national interests crucial for further national development, sovereignty, and prosperity. However, the most recognized “grand strategy”-type document, which has its written copy, is the NSC-68, the U.S. strategy of containment toward the Soviet Union (Drew, 1994).

Having understood the grand strategy basics, the author moves further into the details of “strategy forging” on the national level. For further considerations, it is worth to briefly analyze the chart below. It summarizes the basic knowledge of primary stakeholders, timelines, legal framework, and facilitates the understanding of the entire process. The chart delivers reference points to seek more details on the U.S. strategies.

**Table 1.** The comprehensive outlook of U.S. strategic-level documents

PRODUCT	STAKEHOLDER	SUPPORTING BODY	LEGAL BASE	TIMELINE
National Security Strategy (NSS) UNCLASSIFIED	President of United States (POTUS)	Assistant to President on the National Security Affairs (APNSA) National Security Council (NSC)	Title 50, U.S. Code, Chapter 44, National Security, § 3043 Annual national security strategy report	Deliver the NSS not later than 150 days after assuming the office
National Defense Strategy (NDS) CLASSIFIED & UNCLASSIFIED	Secretary of Defense (SECDEF)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans and Capabilities Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)	Title 10, U.S. Code, Chapter 2, §113 Secretary of Defense	Deliver the NDS in January, every four years
National Military Strategy (NMS) CLASSIFIED & UNCLASSIFIED	Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)	Director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy, J-5 Directorate Joint Staff	Title 10 U.S. Code, Chapter 5, § 153 Chairman: Functions	Deliver the NMS (or update) not later than February 15 of each even-numbered year

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

## The National Security Strategy

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed the Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA). The GNA significantly changed the National Security Act of 1947 and compelled the U.S. President to submit an annual report

on national security strategy to the Congress (Goldwater Nichols Act, 1986). So, the first “new” national security strategy report was delivered in 1987 during the second administration of President Ronald Reagan. Since that time, only sixteen strategies were provided: two from Ronald Reagan, three from President George H.W. Bush, seven from President Bill Clinton, two from President George W. Bush, and two from President Barack Obama (NSA Archives). Although there are many observations that an annual requirement for the NSS report could be too frequent because a nation’s approach to national security is unlikely to change every year (DuMont, 2019).

The United States Code describes the National Security Strategy (NSS) in Title 50 War and National Defense, Chapter 44 National Security. That law officially obliges the POTUS to deliver the “national security strategy report of the United States” to the Congress (The 50 U.S. Code § 3043) annually. The NSS establishes the strategic vision for the administration in power, provides objectives, and includes all elements of the national power (Stolberg, 2012). It also clearly defines the scope of the document emphasizing the interests, goals, employment of the elements of national power to achieve long-term and short-term goals, as well as foreign policy and worldwide commitments. The NSS is a primary public document, which creates a list of national interests and desirable goals (ends). However, the NSS does not contain specific ways and means needed for an executable strategy. That is because it must remain as an unclassified document and serve principally as the strategic communication tool for internal and external use. So, the fundamental layout of the NSS must include:

1. The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.
2. The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States.
3. The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national

power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph 1.

4. The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.
5. Such other information as may be necessary to help inform the Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States (The 50 U.S. Code § 3043).

Throughout the process of crafting the NSS, the POTUS is assisted and facilitated by the members of the National Security Council (NSC). The NSC consists of the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of the Treasury, and other officers of the United States Government whom the President may designate. The NSC is the principal POTUS's forum for deliberating, coordinating, developing, approving, and implementing national security and foreign policy. Additionally, the NSC develops policy options, considers implications, coordinates operational problems that require interdepartmental consideration, develops recommendations for the POTUS, and monitors policy implementation. The NSC also prepares national security guidance that, after the Presidential approval, becomes a national security policy. When implemented, these policy decisions drive military planning and programming. During the NSS 2017 drafting process, the National Security Advisor played a crucial role. As stated earlier, the military background of LTG McMaster, as a National Security Advisor (NSA), smoothed the cooperation with other key players during the drafting process. All three crucial stakeholders, the NSA, the SECDEF, and CJSC, had a comparable understanding of the future strategic environment, applied the same tools, and used the same language to describe strategic processes and interrelations. The knowledge, experience, as well as political and strategic guidance, received and prioritized

during the development of NSS, SECDEF could apply while drafting the National Defense Strategy. Finally, CJSC could use it while developing the National Military Strategy.

The NSS delivery date is not precisely determined, but it must be presented to the U.S. Congress between the first Monday of January and the first Monday of February. Additionally, the newly elected POTUS must deliver his new strategy report within 150 days after assuming the office. On December 18, 2017, after the 332 days in the Oval Office, President Donald Trump officially revealed the National Security Strategy of the United States. That document formally became the 17th National Security Strategy Report within the history of the USA. The 68-page condensed, unclassified document includes four principles: protect the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life; promote American prosperity; preserve peace through strength; and advance American influence. The document concludes with a short description of the strategic approach toward six regional contexts, most likely prioritized as Indo-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, South and Central Asia, Western Hemisphere, and Africa. The security strategy uses “America first” as a lead. The first two pillars associate domestic strength with military capabilities and clearly show that America depends on the allies and strategic partners. The next two pillars emphasize these messages and explain the role of America in cooperation with the international civil organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, or World Trade Organizations, as well as military organizations such as NATO. The NSS 2017 clearly defines the main threats for the American way of life. In the pillar “Preserve Peace through Strength”, Russia and China were described as revisionist powers threatening America. The NSS adds North Korea and Iran as rogue states competing against the USA. The final threat comes from Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO), particularly Jihadist terrorist groups. However, after defining the main security challenges, POTUS understands international relations more as competition than war.

The NSS delivers the general framework for the other enterprises to commence the detailed Planning. It is also the unclassified docu-

ment, publicly accessible. So, it does not include details on “ways” (Strategic Concepts) and “means” (National Power), but describes “ends” as national objectives, defines security challenges, and orchestrates U.S. global interests. The NSS serves as a major reference for further refinement of security challenges in the NDS and the NMS.



**Figure 1.** Keywords application in NSS 2015 and NSS 2017

Source: COL. Felipe Quero (ESP), USAWC with [www.wordart.com](http://www.wordart.com)

## The National Defense Strategy

The new Presidential administration focused not only on the development of the National Security Strategy as the official document regarding the security matters of the United States. Two months before assuming the office by President Trump, the U.S. Congress voted the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, 2016) for the Fiscal Year 2017. The U.S. Constitution requires Congressional authorization for the “common defense”, and every year, the House of Representatives and Senate come together to discuss and vote the NDAA. That document does not directly fund the military, but

it authorizes the policies under which the appropriate committees will set defense funding. That massive and complicated document consists of more than 1,500 pages and approves substantial changes for the strategic level planning in 2017. The NDAA 2017 repealed Title 10, USC, Chapter 2 Department of Defense, Section §118, and eliminated the requirement for delivering a Defense Strategic Review (DSR) (NDAA, 2015). That document was replaced by the changes in Title 10 U.S. Code Chapter 2 Department of Defense, Section §113, which obliged the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) to deliver a classified version of the National Defense Strategy (NDS, 2008) instead of the unclassified DSR.

Various factors initiated the changes in the current security policy. In the author's opinion, the most significant imperative for change was the political determination to limit the number of unclassified "bureaucratic" documents (e.g. DSR), with only marginal impact on strategic-level Planning (Gould, 2016). However, there were some comments that classified NDS with only the limited access would considerably hamper Congress supervision on defense matters. But the NDS 2018 became a classified document and included the following information:

1. The priority missions of the Department of Defense and the assumed force planning scenarios and constructs.
2. The assumed strategic environment, including the most critical and enduring threats to the national security of the United States and its allies posed by state or non-state actors, and the strategies that the Department will employ to counter such threats and provide for the national defense.
3. A strategic framework prescribed by the SECDEF that guides how the Department will prioritize among the threats described in paragraph 1 and the missions specified pursuant to paragraph 1, how the Department of Defense will allocate and mitigate the resulting risks, and make resource investments.
4. The roles and missions of the armed forces to carry out the missions described in paragraph 1, and the assumed roles and capabilities provided by other United States Government agencies, by allies, and international partners.

5. The force size and shape, force posture, defense capabilities, force readiness, infrastructure, organization, personnel, technological innovation, and other elements of the defense programme necessary to support such a strategy.
6. The major investments in defense capabilities, force structure, force readiness, force posture, and technological innovation that the Department of Defense will make over the following five-year period according with the strategic framework described in para 3.

The Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) developed the NDS, and the principal advisor for any strategic and planning issues to the SECDEF is an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities. Additionally, the CJCS serves as a SECDEF advisor on any military matters. That reveals the unique dual-role of the CJCS as an advisor on military issues. He simultaneously advises to the POTUS and the SECDEF. That could eventually lead to the tensions on how to prioritize divergent POTUS and the SECDEF requirements. From the other side, the CJCS captures a unique political and strategic perspective to draft the National Military Strategy. The SECDEF ought to deliver the NDS in January, every four years to the secretaries of the military departments (Army, Navy, Air Force), the Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces, the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands, and the heads of all defense agencies and field activities of the Department of State.

The NDS is a classified document, but DoD published the unclassified abstract on its website. The 14-page document analyzes the complex strategic security environment and details the main security threats to the United States from revisionist powers and rogue states. The NDS also confirms rapid technological advancements and the changing character of war due to the presence of state and non-state actors with increasingly sophisticated military capabilities. Despite the “geographical supremacy”, the territory of the United States is not anymore a sanctuary, so the defense objectives detailed that security paradigm. Additionally, the NDS describes partnership and cooperation with allies, but with the



remarks of “fairly sharing responsibilities for the common defense”. The NDS allocates three main lines of efforts to be pursued by the United States Armed Forces in the nearest future: build a more lethal force, strengthen alliances and attract new partners, and reform the Department of Defense for greater performance (Piotrowski, 2018). The NDS was officially announced on January 19, 2017 by Secretary Mattis during his speech at Johns Hopkins University at the School of Advanced International Studies, just one month after the NSS publication. He emphasized the role of U.S. Congress in setting budgeting priorities, but also pointed out to the fact of the overstretching capabilities and under-resourcing the U.S. Armed Forces in 2007–2017 (Cruickshank, 2018). Some commentators describe the NDS with just three words, like the popular bumper sticker, “Compete, Deter, and Win” (Karlin, 2018). However, after the announcement of the NDS, the well-known security analyst, Anthony Cordesman, criticized the lack of concrete specifications for implementing President’s proposals from the campaign. He said, “there is no timeline and no budget figures”. Besides, Cordesman made some significant comments on the weak financial support of the strategic programmes for future forces (Cordesman, 2018).

## **The National Military Strategy**

The third strategic level document exclusively describing the military issues is the National Military Strategy (NMS). Strategic Planning requires a “top-down waterfall” policy. However, due to the time constraint, the planning process on the NSS, the NDS, and the NMS progressed almost simultaneously. It was because of the already mentioned unique command and control architecture, internal relations, as well as the responsibilities of key stakeholders. The development of the NMS lies within the responsibility of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). However, the CJCS has a unique role in that process, because he serves as the principal military advisor to POTUS, but also to NSC, and SECDEF. The Title 10 U.S. Code § 153 defines the CJCS’s primary functions, but his prin-

cial responsibility is to develop the NMS. So, he is to analyze the NSS, as well as NDS and synthesize the future security challenges and find the “ways” and “means” to face them actively. Additionally, the SECDEF delivers to CJCS office supplementary documents, for example, Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) and Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF), as enabling documents for detailed military Planning on the CJSC level (How the Army runs, 2018). Each NMS should base on a comprehensive review conducted by the CJSC in conjunction with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commanders of the unified and specified combatant commands (The 10 U.S. Code § 164). The NMS can provide both classified and unclassified version, and must:

1. Assess the strategic environment, threats, opportunities, and challenges that affect the national security of the United States;
2. Assess military ends, ways, and means to support the objectives referred in NSS and NDS;
3. Provide the framework for the assessment by the CJSC of military risk, and for the development of risk mitigation options;
4. Develop military options to address threats and opportunities;
5. Assess joint force capabilities, capacities, and resources;
6. Establish military guidance for the development of the joint force and the total force building on guidance by the POTUS and the SECDEF.

The officer of primary responsibility (OPR) for developing, reviewing, and preparing the NMS for the CJSC’s signature is the Director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy, J-5 Directorate. During the NMS drafting process, the J-5 Directorate receives the support on specific areas and topics from the entire Joint Staff. The Chairman shall determine for each even-numbered year whether to prepare a new NMS or update an existing strategy. Then the CJSC submits the developed NMS (or only the update) through the Secretary of Defense not later than February 15 of each even-numbered year. The NMS then is submitted to the Committees on Armed Services of

the Senate and the House of Representatives the National Military Strategy. The National Defense Strategy provides straight answers for the question “what” (ends) and delivers the strategic concepts (ways), while the CJSC by his NMS must provide the answer for the question “how” by aligning ends, ways, means (resources), and risks to accomplish the missions called for in support of U.S. national interests and objectives. The NMS focuses the efforts of the Armed Forces of the United States while conveying the CJSC’s advice to the President, SECDEF, and the Congress, concerning the security environment and the necessary military actions to protect vital U.S. national global-range security interests. It also emphasizes the role of CJCS as a “global integrator” responsible for assisting the SECDEF in strategic Planning and the strategic direction of the armed forces to ensure the highest effectiveness during military operations. The NMS informs combatant commanders on the employment of the Joint Force to protect vital U.S. interests from the global perspective and prioritize the upcoming changes in the force development process. It also informs allies, partners, and adversaries on military strategy and can amplify NSS or NDS messages (How the Army runs, 2018). The NMS is the primary document for U.S. Armed Forces to navigate through the security challenges defined in NSS and NDS. The NMS developed in 2018 (based on the unclassified extract) replicates the same security challenges areas listed in NSS and NDS: China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO). However, the NMS complemented the security challenges with five primary mission areas: deter a strategic attack, deter a conventional attack, assure allies and partners, compete below armed conflict, and respond to threats. The delivery of the NMS concluded the complicated and exhausting process of strategic planning. It started with delivering the NSS in December 2017 and was completed in February 2018 by providing the NMS.

## Conclusions

The election of the new President of the United States always commences the complex process of reviewing future security challenges, then updating the legal framework to better shape the internal and external environment. The planning teams on the Presidential level, SECDEF level, and CJCS level have to follow the “top-down” oriented planning process in a comprehensive model but limited by the legal framework. The entire process has been codified under the U.S. Code Title 50 and provides a detailed timeline. However, the process of developing strategies always is “event-driven”, not “time-driven”. So, the 150-day limit set in the U.S. Code Title 50 to deliver the NSS report by newly elected President has never been met. Besides, global security does not change rapidly, so that is the most likely reason why Trump’s administration published only one National Security Strategy report.

However, the entire process of implementing the new security approach to the U.S. strategies by Trump administration took almost thirteen months. It employed the crucial security enterprises: POTUS and National Security Council, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Staff on three different levels. They published their respective strategic documents (NSS, NDS, NMS) in sequential order. The NSS was released, on December 18, 2017, the NDS was released only two weeks later, on January 19, 2018, and CJCS complemented and concluded the strategic planning process by publishing NMS on February 10, 2018. Achievement of that pace would not be possible without the proper preparation of procedures and efficient cooperation among key stakeholders. According to the assessment of the non-attributed four-star U.S. general, “that was the first time in history when NSS, NDS, NMS, and the Unified Command Plan were in line and synchronized”. That explains the importance of the personalities, knowledge, and experience of the critical personnel designated to run the strategic planning process. However, the key actors of the 2017–2018 strategic planning process did not survive the political challenges and deteriorating civil-military relations. LTG McMaster vacated position as an NSA, then

SECDEF Mattis resigned from office (Boot, 2020). General Dunford was the only one who accomplished his full term as the CJCS. These personnel changes emphasized that the nation needs to possess a significant number of educated personnel, not only a couple of brilliant individuals.

Additionally, the coherent legal framework enables successfully lead the strategic planning process. And that framework within the U.S. legal system is provided by the U.S. Code Title 50 with additional amendments supplied by the NDAA. The next U.S. National Defense Strategy would be most likely published not earlier than 2021, after the election of the next President of the United States.

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## **Perspektywa wojskowa na planowanie strategiczne w Stanach Zjednoczonych w latach 2017–2018**

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł charakteryzuje proces opracowywania dokumentów strategicznych w Stanach Zjednoczonych w latach 2017–2018. Głównym celem artykułu jest analiza procesu planowania w czasie administracji prezydenta Donalda Trumpa oraz przedstawienie wniosków do wykorzystania w innych państwach. W treści artykułu znajduje się objaśnienie najważniejszych podstaw teoretycznych z obszaru planowania strategicznego, głównych procesów, jak również najważniejszych podmiotów organizacyjnych z obszaru bezpieczeństwa państwa. Artykuł skupia się jedynie na okresie 2017–2018 ze względu na znaczące zmiany, które zaszły w obszarze legislacyjnym, jak również udział w całym procesie planowania strategicznego kluczowych oficerów Sił Zbrojnych Stanów Zjednoczonych. W artykule wykorzystano techniki oraz narzędzia badawcze z obszaru wojskowości, jednak szeroko zaprezentowano informacje dotyczące aktów prawnych czy odniesień historycznych w celu ułatwienia zrozumienia skomplikowanego procesu planowania strategicznego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** obrona narodowa, strategia, proces planowania, DIME, strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego, strategia obronności, planowanie

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