Description of the National Military Strategy 2018

The Joint Staff

Overview

The *2018 National Military Strategy* (NMS) provides the Joint Force a framework for protecting and advancing U.S. national interests. Pursuant to statute, it reflects a comprehensive review conducted by the Chairman with the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the unified combatant commanders.

As an overarching military strategic framework, this strategy implements the substantial body of policy and strategy direction provided in the *2017 National Security Strategy*, the *2018 National Defense Strategy* (NDS), the *Defense Planning Guidance* (DPG), and other documents. The 2018 NMS provides the Chairman's military advice for how the Joint Force implements the defense objectives in the NDS and the direction from the President and the Secretary of Defense.

The 2018 NMS also reflects lessons learned from implementing global integration over the last two years. The strategy articulates a continuum of strategic direction to frame global integration into three strategy horizons to meet the challenges of the existing and future security environment. *Force employment* addresses planning, force management, and decisionmaking to fulfill the defense objectives of the NDS. *Force development* adapts functions, capabilities, and concepts to improve the current Joint Force. *Force design* innovates to enable the Joint Force to do what it does differently to retain a competitive advantage against any adversary.

The vision of the Joint Force articulated in the 2018 NMS is a Joint Force capable of defending the homeland and projecting power globally, now and into the future.

Strategic Approach

From its global perspective, the NMS premises an adaptive and innovative Joint Force capable of employing its capabilities seamlessly across multiple regions and all domains -- continuing the transition from a regional to a global mindset and approach.

NDS Relevant Security Trends

- Reemergence of great-power competition
- Post-World War II order—resilient but weakening
- Technology and the changing character of war: diffusion, competition, and new threats
- Empowered non-state actors
- Homeland is no longer a sanctuary
- Threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)
- Allies and partners—evolving opportunities
- Battle of narratives
- Scale and urgency of change

This strategy anchors its approach against a set of clearly identified security trends outlined in the NDS (see inset).

These trends, especially those posed by the reemergence of great power competition with China and Russia, represent the most difficult challenges facing the Joint Force. However, the full scope of global integration must recognize uncertainty and be vigilant for emerging threats to the security and interests of the United States, its allies and partners. In a security environment where the homeland is no longer a sanctuary and every operating domain is contested, competitors and adversaries will continue to operate across geographic regions and span multiple domains to offset or erode Joint Force advantages.

To achieve military advantage over competitors and adversaries, the NMS introduces the notion of *joint combined arms*, defined as *the conduct of operational art through the integration of joint capabilities in all domains.* The Joint Force and its leaders must be as comfortable fighting in space or cyberspace as they are in the other three traditional domains of land, sea, or air.

Force Employment

To guide force employment, the 2018 NMS orients on the defense objectives in the NDS as its ends. To implement those ends, the 2018 NMS articulates five mutually supporting mission areas (see inset) as the principal ways that the Joint Force operates across the continuum of conflict in multiple regions and in all domains. Defending the homeland is a Joint Force activity that cuts across all five mission areas and spans all joint functions.

NMS Mission Areas

- Respond to Threats
- Deter Strategic Attack (and proliferation of WMD)
- Deter Conventional Attack
- Assure Allies and Partners
- Compete Below the Level of Armed Conflict (With a Military Dimension)

The Joint Force will leverage a wide range of means to enhance force employment. Dynamic Force Employment (DFE) serves as the force management framework to prioritize preparedness for war while meeting current force demands in day-to-day operations. By proactively shaping the security environment through identifying and exploiting strategic opportunities, DFE aligns Joint Force actions across multiple global campaign plans, defense critical missions, time horizons, warfighting domains, and geographic boundaries.

As one of the principal methods by which the Joint Force operationalizes the NDS's Global Operating Model, DFE will assist in balancing current operational needs with readiness recovery and modernization to preserve Joint Force competitive advantage.

The 2018 NMS acknowledges the unique contributions of allies and partners, a strategic source of strength for the Joint Force. Building a strong, agile, and resilient force requires better interoperability and enhancing the combat

lethality and survivability of our allies and partners. The NMS also informs engagement with interagency partners, both abroad and domestically, to enable the Joint Force to best support the application of all instruments of national power throughout the continuum of conflict.

To prepare the Joint Force for employment, exercises build readiness, interoperability, and the mutual trust required for a joint combined arms approach to global campaigning. Those exercises are key to building interoperability, relationships, and capabilities of allies, partner nations, and interagency partners, as well as enabling units and leaders to "punch above weight class" when necessary. Exercises can also facilitate near-term experimentation to rapidly incorporate innovative ideas and disruptive technologies that promote competitive advantage.

Force Development and Force Design

Force Development and Force Design are the expression of Joint Force adaptation and innovation under global integration to implement the NDS's direction to build a more lethal force. *Force Development* adapts current planning, decisionmaking, and force management processes to enable the Joint Force to do what it does *better*. *Force Design* enables the Joint Force to do what it does *in fundamentally different and disruptive ways* to ensure the Joint Force can deter or defeat future adversaries.

As with force employment, the ends for force development and force design are drawn from the defense objectives of the NDS. To implement those ends and build a combat-credible Joint Force capable of defending the homeland, deterring competitors, and defeating adversaries, the NMS outlines three ways oriented on the investments in the Joint Force's people, ideas, and equipment to maintain its competitive advantage.

To implement the force investment priorities of the NDS, the 2018 NMS provides guidance to inform the development of a Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO). The CCJO will express the collective vision of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for a Joint Force designed and able to out-think, out-maneuver, and out-fight any adversary under conditions of disruptive change. It will mark a shift to a concept-driven, threat-informed, capability development process and provide a campaign approach to unify service capabilities across materiel and non-materiel solutions.

Achieving the Joint Chiefs' vision will require people—the Joint Force's primary source of competitive advantage—to continuously adapt and innovate to maintain their competitive edge.

Consistent with the guidance laid out in the NDS, capability investments must emphasize military advantages in lethality and operational reach, while enabling the Joint Force to compete effectively below the level of armed conflict.

Conclusion

The *2018 National Military Strategy* describes a roadmap for how the Joint Force will defend the homeland and retain its competitive advantage to deter competitors and defeat adversaries, whether great power competitors like China and Russia or other security challenges, now and into the future.

Implementation of the strategy is informed by strategic frameworks, input from the field, and the judgment of senior leaders. The NMS guides other joint documents including the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan, global campaign plans, the CCJO, and other capability development and program advice documents, and the body of assessments that benchmark those documents.

Collectively, the strategy and its related processes will enable the Joint Force to provide a range of military options that enhance the military contribution to national security and best serve the national interests of the United States.

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