



# ISSUE BRIEF

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## National Defence Strategy of USA: Where is India's National Defence Strategy

### Introduction

The U.S. Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis released the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) summary during a speech at Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies on January 19, 2018. This is the first National Defense Strategy in nearly a decade. The last was published under the signature of Bob Gates in June 2008, during the latter days of the Bush administration. The NDS replaces the erstwhile Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). However, it differs in one crucial way: the NDS is classified. The 11-page document Mattis released is an unclassified summary of what is likely a more detailed and far-reaching strategic guidance document for the U.S. Defense Department. The NDS is the military-specific follow-up to the White House's National Security Strategy (NSS), released in December, 2017.

The NDS is the second of three interlocking documents that will drive America's strategic posture. In December 2017, President Donald Trump unveiled his NSS, which drives the



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### *Key Points*

1. US Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis released the 11-page unclassified summary of National Defense Strategy (NDS) on 19 January 2018.
2. Process of different strategy making follows the sequence of National Security Strategy (NSS), NDS and the National Military Strategy (NMS).
3. 2018 NDS underscores the importance of technological innovation and development of new capabilities. It insists upon a clear-eyed focus on Russia and China as greater potential threats than ISIS or Al Qaeda.
4. India does not have a NSS, NDS or a NMS. The Defence Minister issues a highly classified operational directive. A bottom up approach seems to have been taken.
5. NSS, NDS and NMS should be issued by National Security Council Secretariat, MoD and Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff respectively.

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think-tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflict and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

## National Defence Strategy of USA ...

administration's overall national security posture. The NDS focuses on the Pentagon's goals within the NSS and is driven by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. That will be followed later this year by the National Military Strategy (NMS), written by Gen. Joe Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which explains how the Pentagon will operationalise the NDS. This is likely to be published later this year. The NSS and NDS have been joined by the Nuclear Posture Review. Cybersecurity strategy is on the anvil.

### Process of Different Strategy Making

At the highest level is the NSS, signed by the President. It outlines the broadest level goals and discusses how to integrate all elements of national power in pursuit of those goals. One step down is the NDS, signed by the Secretary of Defense. It focuses on the defence role in implementing the strategy outlined in the NSS. One further step down is the NMS. It focuses on the role of the uniformed military in support of the NDS and NSS; and below that would be the individual service strategies that focus on the roles of air power, sea power or land-power.

### Defence Department Objectives

The new NDS lists eleven key objectives for Department of Defence (DoD) which are given below:

- defending the homeland from attack;
- sustaining Joint Force military advantages, both globally and in key regions;
- deterring adversaries from aggression against our vital interests;
- enabling U.S. interagency counterparts to advance the United States influence and interests;
- maintaining favourable regional balances of power in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and the western hemisphere;
- defending allies from military aggression and bolstering partners against coercion and fairly sharing responsibilities for common defence;

- dissuading, preventing or deterring state adversaries and non-state actors from acquiring, proliferating or using weapons of mass destruction;
- preventing terrorists from directing or supporting external operations against the United States homeland and our citizens, allies and partners overseas;
- ensuring common domains remain open and free;
- continuously delivering performance with affordability and speed as we change departmental mindset, culture and management systems;
- establishing an unmatched 21st century National Security Innovation Base that effectively supports department operations and sustains security and solvency.

2018 NDS has several clear, cogent and convincing emphases. It underscores the importance of technological innovation and development of new capabilities. It insists upon a clear-eyed focus on Russia and China as greater potential threats than Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIS) or Al-Qaeda. In true Mattis-like fashion, it describes the importance of preserving American operational flexibility and unpredictability. And it also reiterates a strong commitment to the well-being of America's men and women in uniform and their combat readiness.

A strategy summary document given out during the release of NDS stated that by approving long-term spending budgets, Congress will enable the military to work through its 15-year backlog of unmet procurement and modernisation requirements, including:

- updating nuclear command, control and support infrastructure to better counter attacks from US adversaries;
- prioritising investments in space operations and capabilities;
- integrating cyber defence into the full spectrum of military operations;

- developing information systems that support the military's tactical operations, strategic planning and intelligence gathering.

In general, it is generally appreciated that this NDS is a step in the right direction. It is coherent and honest and highlights the very real challenges the United States is currently facing and will likely face in the near future. The 2018 document propounds a clear vision of the current challenges to U.S. security, the roles military force will play in protecting against those challenges, the priorities for spending and activity to strengthen the enterprise. It is admirably clear in stating that "interstate strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in U.S. national security." No one reading it can miss that emphasis: it establishes the framework for organizing, training, equipping, and committing U. S. forces. The priorities perhaps would have been given in the classified part of the document. In open domain if it is given, it gives clear indication to the adversaries who are unwarranted at this stage.

No document can be perfect. NDS does not and could not settle all major defence issues before the country. How to apply its general ideas to specific problems will remain a major challenge in the months and years ahead.

### India's Defence Strategy?

India does not have a NSS, NDS or a NMS. Whenever NSS, QDR and so forth are published by the United States, there is a considerable noise generated by Indian strategic community about the non-availability of such documents in India. Curiously, there is not much to comment on the lack of documents as the NDS or NMS in India.

Publication of strategies is not a very old phenomenon. The first NSS of the United Kingdom was published in March 2008. The Brazilian 2008

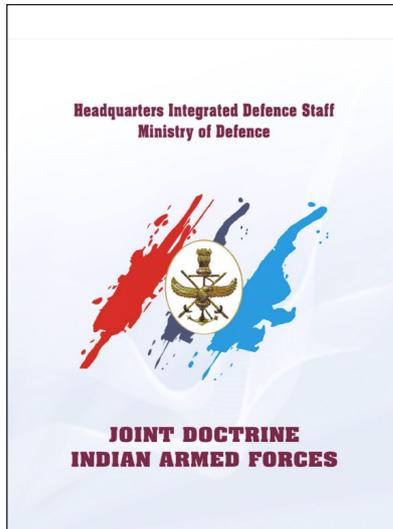
National Strategy of Defense (NSD) represents the first national strategy of its kind in Latin America. Australia had its first National Security Statement in 2008. China still does not have a NSS. What they publish, which is eagerly awaited every year is China's Military Strategy, published by the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China.

Though India does not have a NSS or NDS, the Defence Minister issues operational directive annually to the services giving his directions. This is a highly classified document and no comments can be offered in open domain.

If we follow the US process, our NSS should be made by National Council Secretariat (NSCS), signed by Prime Minister, NDS made by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), signed by the defence minister, NMS made by Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQIDS), signed by Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (in the absence of CDS) and then the individual service doctrines issues by respective service HQs signed by Services Chiefs. The strategy is generally made at the top as NSS and the other strategies follow consequently based over the direction of the respective immediate higher authorities. This is a top down approach.

In India, a bottom-up approach seems to have been taken. All individual services have their respective doctrines. Ideally this should have been guided by the joint doctrine. The first Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces was published in April 2017.

In the absence of any published NSS or NDS, some very reasonable assumptions have been made in the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces. Some of the examples are discussed below.



### *National Security Strategy (NSS)*

Our NSS primarily revolves around safeguarding our nation from any type of internal and external threats/aggression. In addition, our NSS encompasses preservation and strengthening of India's democratic polity, development process, internal stability and unity in its unique multicultural settings. Our NSS also addresses the general well-being of our vast population, the vitality of our economy in context of globalisation and the rapidly advancing technological world. A regional and an international environment of peace and cooperation will facilitate the safeguarding of our interests. Even though we have no formally articulated National Security Policy and Strategy, it does not imply that they do not exist or are not sufficiently understood.

### *National Military Objectives (NMOs)*

National Military Objectives (NMOs) accruing out from national security requirements are as follows:

- Prevent war through strategic and conventional deterrence across the full spectrum of military conflict to ensure the defence of India, our national interests and sovereignty.
- Prosecute military operations to defend territorial integrity and ensure favourable end

state during war to achieve stated/implicit political objective(s).

- Provide assistance to ensure internal security, when called upon to do so.
- Be prepared for contingencies at home and abroad to render Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), aid to civil authority and international peacekeeping, when called upon to do so.
- Enable the required degree of self-sufficiency in defence equipment and technology through indigenisation to achieve the desired degree of technological independence by 2035.

In the existing organisational set up, MoD is not in a position to issue NDS. It does not have domain knowledge experts as all the officials are rotated in different ministries and there is no permanency. However, it hugely funds the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). IDSA can be tasked to produce a NDS. If need be subject matter experts, other think tanks can be co-opted.

NSS can be made by NSCS. In earlier times, some of the think tanks did make efforts and made draft NSS, but nothing came out of those. Recently, there was an effort to write NSS at NSCS. One is not sure what has happened to that.

National Military strategy (NMS) should be issued by the *HQ IDS*. It has adequate staff and expertise to do that.

It is recommended that NSS, NDS, NMS are published in a time-bound manner. At the same time non-availability of such documents does not deter us from doing what is in our own strategic and operational interests. Adequate directions are available.

In India, in the budget for 2018-2019 defence allocation accounts for just 1.58 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP)—the lowest in 50 years in terms of percentage of GDP since the debacle of 1962. GDP was 1.63 percent in 2017-18.

## ... Where is India's National Defence Strategy

How one wishes that the *Raksha mantri* of India would stand up in the parliament and argue forcefully for the armed forces as the Defence Secretary of the United States did at the House Armed Services Committee Hearing on February 6, 2018. He thumped the table and said:

I regret that without sustained, predictable appropriations, my presence here today wastes your time because no strategy can survive without the funding necessary to resource it.

Let me be clear: as hard as the last 16 years of war have been, no enemy in the field has done more to harm the readiness of the U.S. military than the combined impact of the Budget Control Act's defence spending caps, worsened by operating in 10 of the last 11 years under continuing resolutions of varied and unpredictable duration.

For too long we have asked our military to carry-on stoically with a 'success at any cost' attitude. Our troops work tirelessly to accomplish every mission with increasingly inadequate and misaligned resources simply because the congress has not maintained regular order. The fact that our volunteer military has

performed so well is a credit to their dedication and professionalism. We expect the men and women of our military to be faithful in their service, even when going in harm's way. We must also remain faithful to them. As speaker Ryan said in January, "our men and women in uniform are not bargaining chips."

I know that in time of a major war, congress will provide our military with what they need. But money at the time of crisis fails to deter war, and you know we would at that point have no time to prepare, as it takes months and years to produce the munitions, training and readiness required to fight well.

To carry out the strategy you rightly directed we develop, we need you to pass a budget now. If we are to sustain our military's primacy, we need budget predictability. I know many want to avoid additional spending, but congress must take action now to ensure our military lethality is sufficient to defend our way of life, preserve the prosperity our country enjoys and pass on the freedoms we enjoy to the next generation. I ask that you not let disagreements on domestic policy continue to hold our nation's defence hostage.

Sounds familiar?

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*The contents of this Issue Brief are based on the analysis of material accessed from open sources and are the personal views of the author. It may not be quoted as representing the views or policy of the Government of India or Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army).*



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