

“A strategy must evaluate, sort, and prioritize. Not every country, region, issue, or cause—however worthy—can be the focus of American strategy.”

Purpose of the 2025 National Security Strategy

The 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS), released during the second Trump Administration, represents a deliberate reset of American strategic thinking. Unlike many prior strategies that attempted to address every global issue simultaneously, this document emphasizes focus, prioritization, and alignment between national objectives and available means. Its central purpose is to safeguard the United States as a sovereign republic by protecting core national interests rather than pursuing open-ended global commitments. The strategy explicitly rejects what it describes as post-Cold War “strategic overreach” and instead advances a framework grounded in realism, restraint, and peace through strength.

“The purpose of foreign policy is the protection of core national interests; that is the sole focus of this strategy....Strength is the best deterrent. Countries or other actors sufficiently deterred from threatening American interests will not do so.”

Key Strategic Themes

- *America First as Strategic Discipline* - The NSS defines “America First” not as isolationism, but as disciplined prioritization. National security policy is framed around the protection of American citizens, territory, economic vitality, and constitutional freedoms. Issues or regions that do not directly affect these core interests, are deprioritized.
- *Peace Through Strength* - Deterrence remains central. The strategy calls for the world’s most capable military, a revitalized defense industrial base, and a modernized nuclear deterrent. Strength is presented as the primary means of preventing war, shortening conflicts when they occur, and discouraging adversaries from testing U.S. resolve.
- *Economic Security Is National Security* - Economic power is treated as foundational. The strategy prioritizes reindustrialization, secure supply chains, energy dominance (including nuclear), and protection of critical technologies such as AI, biotech, and quantum computing. Trade policy is explicitly linked to national resilience and defense readiness.
- *Sovereignty and Border Security* - The NSS frames border control, immigration enforcement, and resistance to foreign influence operations as core national security imperatives. Mass migration is identified as a destabilizing force with implications for economic stability, social cohesion, and public safety.
- *Burden-Sharing with Allies* - While reaffirming alliances, the strategy demands greater responsibility from partners—particularly in defense spending and regional security leadership. The United States positions itself as a convener and enabler rather than the sole guarantor of global stability.

“The world’s fundamental political unit is and will remain the nation-state.”

Regional Priorities

- *Western Hemisphere First* - The strategy reasserts U.S. primacy in the Western Hemisphere through what it calls a “Trump Corollary” to the Monroe Doctrine. Priorities include countering transnational crime, controlling migration flows, securing supply chains, and preventing hostile powers from establishing strategic footholds.



2025 National Security Strategy: Key Takeaways for NSF Attendees

- ✚ *Indo-Pacific Competition* - China is identified as the principal long-term competitor. The NSS emphasizes economic competition, technological leadership, alliance strengthening, and deterrence—particularly regarding Taiwan and freedom of navigation.
- ✚ *Europe and Strategic Stability* - The strategy supports European security while pressing for increased European self-reliance, an end to free-riding, and a negotiated end to the Ukraine conflict to restore long-term stability.
- ✚ *Middle East and Africa* - The NSS seeks to avoid “forever wars” while encouraging regional partners to assume greater responsibility. Economic engagement, energy cooperation, and selective diplomacy replace large-scale military commitments.

“Because economic security is fundamental to national security, we will work to further strengthen the American economy.”

Why This Strategy Matters

- *Strategic Clarity* - The 2025 NSS offers clearer prioritization than many recent strategies. By defining what matters most—and what does not—it provides a more realistic framework for decision-making under constrained resources.
- *Implications for Defense and Industry* - The emphasis on reindustrialization, defense production, and energy infrastructure has direct implications for the defense industrial base, advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, and workforce development.
- *Intelligence and Deterrence* - The strategy reinforces the central role of intelligence in identifying vulnerabilities, securing supply chains, and countering influence operations—while emphasizing deterrence over permanent intervention.
- *Domestic Resilience* - By linking national security to economic vitality, border control, energy systems, and infrastructure resilience, the NSS broadens security beyond the battlefield to everyday American life.
- *Global Signaling* - The strategy sends a clear message to allies and adversaries alike: the United States will remain engaged, powerful, and influential—but only where its core interests are at stake.

Questions for Discussion

- Does this strategy strike the right balance between restraint and deterrence?
- How realistic are its expectations for allies and partners?
- What risks arise from a narrower definition of national interest?
- How might this strategy shape U.S. responses to crises in the next decade?

What to Watch for in 2026

We will highlight components of the 2025 NSS in our 2026 program lineup, including:

- Western Hemisphere First: History and context of US engagement in Central and South American
- Nuclear Strategy, Countering Nuclear Proliferation, and Missile Defense
- Energy Security, Grid Resilience, and Critical Infrastructure
- Intelligence, Surveillance, and Strategic Engagement
- Artificial Intelligence in Warfare

This handout is intended to support informed discussion during the NSF’s 2026 forum and events.

Program dates, speakers, and registration details will be announced throughout the year.