Making Policy and Strategy

Cognitive Lesson Objective:
- Know the basic concepts of making US Policy and formulating a national strategy.

Cognitive Samples of Behavior:
- Define national security policy.
- Identify the main ideas of our foreign policies from 1776 to the present.
- Identify the main ideas of each of our deterrent strategies.
- State how a nation determines its national objectives.
- List in order the five steps in the strategy process.

Affective Lesson Objective:
- Respond to the importance of knowing how US policy shapes national strategy.

Affective Samples of Behavior:
- Value that foreign countries, US internal attitudes, and different views within the US government directly impact strategies.
- Voluntarily discuss how the strategy process can be complicated by external factors.
- Voluntarily discuss the connection between battlefield strategy and the vital national interests we’ve sworn to protect.
Have you ever wondered why the United States gets involved in the operations we support or why the military supported certain contingencies in the past? You only need to mention countries like Korea, Vietnam, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, or Iraq to start a lively discussion with most Americans. To fully grasp the policies and interests of the United States and how they affect the use of our military forces, military officers have a professional responsibility to have a basic understanding of the world and its history. Though American foreign policy changes as the global environment alters our national needs or interests, history still offers important lessons for policy makers, military officials, and the American public. After all, those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it!

The formulation of national strategy and foreign policy can be difficult to follow since many other agencies beyond the president are involved. Though Winston Churchill referred to the Soviet Union’s foreign policy as “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” his words seem applicable to the United States’ policy and strategy process today. Hopefully by the end of this reading, you’ll have at least part of the mystery unraveled.

Before we explore the strategy process, we need to define some important terms that over time have mistakenly been used interchangeably. Because each may affect or inform other elements, it is important to understand their subtle nuances.

**Policy** is guidance that is directive or instructive, stating what is to be accomplished. It reflects a conscious choice to pursue certain avenues and not others. Policy is more mutable and changes due to changes in national leadership, political considerations, or for fiscal reasons. Within military operations, policy may be expressed not only in terms of objectives, but also in rules of engagement (ROE), in other words, what we may or may not strike or under what circumstances we may strike particular targets.

**Foreign Policy** is comprised of the goals and guidelines that shape the conduct of American relations with other countries. Additionally, American foreign policy is concerned with the achievement of our national objectives and protecting our national interests through the use of national instruments of power.

**Strategy** defines how operations should be conducted to accomplish national policy objectives. Strategy is the continuous process of matching ends, ways, and means to accomplish desired goals within acceptable levels of risk. Strategy originates in policy and addresses broad objectives, along with the designs and plans for achieving them.

**US National Security Policy** provides for protection of our nation. National security policy includes concerns about the projection of national power, survival, and the well-being of the state, as well as military capabilities. It is designed to protect the nation from external threats and to create an environment that enhances the nation’s ability to achieve our national interests. We merge foreign policy and National Security Strategy together to form our national policy. These are the two factors that shape our actions in relation to other nations.
POLICY INFLUENCES

Now that we have a basic understanding of these terms, let’s take a deeper look into who and what influences US policy.

Executive Branch

There are four components within the Executive Branch:

The President. The President’s role in foreign policy is a product of the US Constitution. According to the Constitution, the President has the sole authority to negotiate treaties with foreign governments and has the power to appoint and remove ambassadors and other officials. Additionally, the President decides which nations the United States will recognize diplomatically.

The State Department. The primary function of the State Department is to provide the President with the facts and advice necessary for determining foreign policy. The State Department is also responsible for implementing foreign policy and enforcing laws of the United States relating to external affairs. The department is responsible for US embassies, consulates, and their personnel, including ambassadors. Most US dealings with foreign governments are handled through embassies. The Secretary of State is generally considered our government’s chief representative in foreign affairs.

The National Security Council (NSC). The NSC is the present organization charged with handling national security matters and was established by the National Security Act of 1947. This is the President’s principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with his senior national security advisors and cabinet officials. The Council also serves as the President’s principal arm for coordinating these policies among various government agencies.

The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The position was created by President Eisenhower in 1953. Although its precise title has varied, the position has come to be known (somewhat misleadingly) as the National Security Advisor. The role of the National Security Advisor, like the role of the NSC itself, has in large measure been a function of the operating style of the President.

Legislative Branch

The framers of the Constitution were deliberate in separating the legislative and executive powers as they pertain to war. While they were willing for the Commander in Chief to go to war as the head of the American military, they were not prepared to give him unlimited power as was the case in monarchical Europe. Thus, declaring war is a formal duty of Congress. This was significant until the post-World War II period since a direct declaration
of war preceded most major military actions. Following 1945, this power has been diluted since it has become the norm for the military instrument to be employed even though a formal declaration of war has not been issued.

Congress is mandated to “raise and maintain” the military forces that the president commands. Congress, on executive recommendation, sets work force ceilings that cannot legally be exceeded and limits how much can be obligated or actually spent for various military programs.

Congress has the “power of the purse.” This means that the executive branch can spend no monies not appropriated for specific purposes by Congress and this congressional power acts as both a direct and an indirect limitation on presidential independence.

Additionally, no treaty negotiated by the president can be ratified without the “advice and consent” of two-thirds of the US Senate.

Finally, high-level presidential appointments are subject to Senate confirmation or rejection. The confirmation process applies to ambassadors, cabinet appointees, and subcabinet-level personnel (e.g., assistant secretaries).

The American People

The American people also have a role in the formulation of foreign and national security policy. Specifically, we’ll examine public opinion, special interest groups, and the press.

Public Opinion. This is classified into three categories:

- **The uninformed public.** The uninformed public consists of more than three-quarters of the population. It doesn’t regularly seek information about foreign affairs and does not form opinions unless its own interests are directly affected by events. Participation by the uninformed public tends to be sporadic and malleable; rather than shape foreign policy, its opinions are shaped by it.

- **The informed public.** The informed public consists of citizens who regularly keep up with, and form, opinions about foreign affairs and national security policy. The informed public represents about one-fifth of the population and the opinions of this group tend to be fairly generalized rather than specific. This group generally contains local opinion leaders (e.g., clergy and journalists) who transmit information to the uninformed public.

- **The effective public.** The most important influence on decision makers comes from the effective public. This segment comprises that part of the public that actively seeks to influence policy and makes up less than five percent of the general population. These individuals seek to influence policy by advocating positions in scholarly and professional journals and testify before Congress.
Interest Groups. These are a group of people with similar attitudes toward some areas of human activity, issue, or problem. There are a number of techniques that interest groups can use to influence government. One of the first methods that comes to mind is lobbying. However, it is important to note that special interest groups perform a number of functions.

First, interest groups provide thorough and expert research. They gather information and develop arguments that support their point of view. For example, interest groups call attention to provisions in legislation they feel are based on ignorance or misinformation. Second, interest groups perform the role of an ombudsman. An ombudsman is “one who investigates reported complaints, reports findings, and helps to achieve equitable settlements.” Members of interest groups help handle grievances, aid in contacting the government agency having jurisdiction over a problem, and give advice on solving problems within the law. A third function of interest groups is the aggregation of interest between groups. In other words, interest groups bargain, compromise, and help build consensus between other interest groups with conflicting interests. For example, labor and business groups negotiate to develop agreements that the legislature can pass.

The Press. Our Constitution is designed to guarantee freedom of the press. In America, freedom of the press means freedom to express opinions contrary to those of the government. When the press turns the spotlight of publicity on a problem or issue, the government must address the public’s response. Some believe the power of the press is so strong that the press could be considered a fourth branch of government.

Now that you know who the players are in national policy, let’s review a brief history of US foreign policy to learn from some of our successes and mistakes. The most important takeaway is an understanding of how national interests guide our foreign policies—only through an analysis of these interests can we make effective decisions.

EVOLUTION OF US FOREIGN POLICY

Since the founding of our nation, the US has embraced three fundamental and enduring goals: to maintain our sovereignty, political freedom, and independence with its values, institutions, and territory intact; to protect the lives and personal safety of Americans, at home and abroad; and to promote the well-being and prosperity of the nation and its people.

Isolationism

Following the American Revolution, our fledgling government quickly established a foreign policy of neutrality and non-entanglement toward European affairs. The American people desired to concentrate their resources on domestic issues, especially family security, rather than the foreign wars occurring in Europe (i.e. Napoleonic Wars, Franco-Prussian War, and global colonization). The physical isolation from Europe seemed much greater in the 1700s than it does today. With no telephones, airplanes, or powered ships to
cross the Atlantic, it was relatively easy for the US to turn inwards. Additionally, American neutrality was crucial for American trade to continue with the belligerent states. In 1823, President Monroe announced a corollary to American isolationism. Commonly called the “Monroe Doctrine,” the announcement was spurred by Spain’s attempts to recapture its lost colonies in Latin America. The Monroe Doctrine declared both the North and South American continents free from colonization by European powers. Any attempt to interfere with the independent governments of the Western Hemisphere would be considered a threat to US security.

**Imperialism**

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, European powers embraced Social Darwinism—Darwinian concepts applied to socio-political relationships which presumed that stronger societies would prevail over the weaker. This fueled a massive global colonization race. Though the US never adopted true Social Darwinism, it did pursue overseas expansion, particularly in the western hemisphere. Fifty years after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the US acquired possession of all land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, northward of the Rio Grande to the 49th parallel. Following the Civil War, the US acquired Alaska in 1867 and the Hawaiian islands in 1898.

At the turn of the 20th century, America gained control over the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and significant control in Cuba. In order to govern territories in both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, it became necessary for the US to build a large naval force. The Theodore Roosevelt Administration backed a Panamanian rebellion which achieved independence from Columbia in 1903 and provided the US a ten-mile stretch of land to build the Panama Canal. Such actions were justified through the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. This stated that the United States had a “moral right and obligation” to intervene in Latin America at any time in order to restore order and protect American interests in the area. The canal was completed in 1914 and marked a major foreign policy achievement at the time. In 1915, the US took control of the customs offices in the Dominican Republic and Marines landed in Nicaragua in 1915, then in Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1916. Despite American moral rejection of Social Darwinism, in practice the American way of life and democracy was spread through Latin America using the “force of a gun.” Animosity towards the United States still exists in parts of Latin America today as a legacy of this policy.

American imperialism continued until 1914 with the outbreak of World War I. From 1914 to 1918, over ten million people lost their lives in the battlefield that was the continent of Europe. The devastation of modern warfare was so horrible that it became known as “The Great War” or the “war to end all wars.” In the aftermath, the former combatants were no longer willing or able to fight, including the United States. Thus, our foreign policy in the inter-war years transitioned to pacifism.
Pacifism

Though disillusioned by the circumstances of the Great War, the US emerged as a powerful political and military state. Still, our European Allies rejected President Wilson’s liberal peace proposals in order to punish what was commonly seen as the war’s instigator, Germany. Among other things, Britain and France fought to make Germany pay for the entire war, including their war pensions, through the punitive Treaty of Versailles.

Another point of disagreement between the Allied Powers was the League of Nations. Proposed as a permanent international body, it served as a hub for all nations to meet and settle disputes while maintaining their sovereignty and avoiding war. Though Europe accepted the League, Congress rejected it and cut many ties to Europe since its complex alliance system had significantly contributed to the war. Ultimately, the League didn’t have the force needed to truly guide international policy and dissolved in 1946.

Instead, the US adopted a model of disarmament by example to demonstrate its goodwill. We entered into many neutrality acts like the Kellogg Peace Pact which outlawed war as a legitimate instrument of national policy.

United Nations (UN) Cooperation

Despite the inter-war years’ international idealism, the combination of the Great Depression, the ineptitude of the League of Nations, harsh post-war reparations, and Japanese aggression in the Pacific set the stage for World War II. Like World War I, the Second World War had a major impact on US foreign policy. Following 1945, the United States enjoyed the distinction of having an intact economy and a monopoly on atomic weapons. Yet the war’s end brought many difficulties, such as the Soviet Union’s open antagonism of the free world, and the need for an international political forum was renewed.

The UN was established in 1945 as an international organization similar to the League of Nations but it wielded actual political power to back its decisions unlike its predecessor. The US altered its foreign policy to incorporate major power cooperation in the UN with the hope of preventing war in international disagreements. However, the Soviet Union saw an opportunity to increase its security by expanding its influence while Europe rebuilt. Descending across Eastern Europe, the Soviets reclaimed Poland, the Baltic countries, and set up communist governments throughout the region. They also instigated numerous communist rebellions around the world. The US’s former ally, China, became a communist government under Mao Tse Tung in 1949. This was a serious blow to the United States because of their significant power in Asia. Thus, our competition with the Soviets rendered this foreign policy of cooperation obsolete.
Containment

The US moved into its next era boldly which was epitomized in President John. F. Kennedy’s inaugural speech: “Let every nation know...that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty.” The goal of containment was to stop Soviet expansion. Although the Soviets were not an immediate threat to the United States, eventually they would be.

One of the first tools to accomplish this was the Marshall Plan of 1948. The Marshall Plan was a broad economic aid policy with the aim of rebuilding Europe, including the Soviet satellite nations. Soviets did not allow their satellites to accept any “imperialist” money. In the summer of 1948, the Soviet Union blockaded Berlin which had been divided into four zones between the Allied Powers. America responded by airlifting supplies into the city for the duration of the blockade and demonstrated its commitment to protecting Western Europe.

Aided by the Marshall Plan, Europe slowly rebuilt. In 1949, the United States helped create the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a political and military alliance founded with the aim of countering Soviet aggression through mutual defense. It originally consisted of the United States, Canada, and ten European states. West Germany, Greece, and Turkey joined after 1949. By 1950, Germany reached and exceeded its prewar industrial production.

Within the US, Containment policy was comprised of five deterrent strategies. Though these strategies supported the larger goal of containing Soviet aggression, each strategy used different methods to do so.

Deterrent Strategies

• Massive Retaliation. With the Korean Conflict fresh in the collective American memory, the US sought to achieve its foreign policy objectives without having to contend with an enemy’s fielded forces. The only option seemed to be through the unique destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons. At this point in time, the US and the Soviet Union faced off as the only seriously capable nuclear powers. The US’ position was clear—if necessary, it would use nuclear weapons at a time and place of its choosing. Unfortunately, our conventional military forces were divested in order to build up the nuclear triad.

In 1957, the Soviet Union stunned the US with its launch of Sputnik, the first satellite to orbit earth. This scared Americans because it removed the natural protection of the oceans from a military strike; the Soviets could now launch nuclear weapons from a new domain—space. Since nuclear superiority was no longer an option, additional military options were needed. Nuclear war with the Soviet Union over smaller disagreements was not worth the potential physical and psychological cost.
- **Graduated Response.** This strategy focused America’s nuclear arsenal on the Soviet military capability rather than target the civilian population. Realizing that we were at a numerical disadvantage with conventional forces, the US began to place tactical nuclear weapons around China and the Soviet Union. Tactical nuclear weapons could quickly counterstrike to even the playing field. Today, some strategists and historians consider the United States’ use of tactical nukes as the main deterrent to a Soviet attack on Western Europe.

The United States continued to prove its resolve in containing communism by supporting many countries in Southeast Asia. In addition, we also expanded alliances and trade in the Pacific region, particularly with Japan and Australia. In 1954, a mutual defense assistance agreement was signed between the US and Japan. It provided for Japanese rearmament with American military and economic aid. Aid increased significantly once the United States realized the magnitude of the threat posed by the Soviet Union’s proximity. The Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS or ANZUS Treaty) was signed in 1951 and demonstrated the United States’ increased attention to this region of the world. Still, the biggest fault of the Graduated Response strategy was its overreliance upon nuclear weapons. Although different types of nuclear weapons offered more flexible options, American conventional forces were still seriously underdeveloped when compared to the Communists.

- **Flexible Response.** The Kennedy administration realized a new strategic concept would give the US greater capability to respond to any level of conflict—from a nuclear engagement to a small crisis. The Green Berets and Navy SEALs were established for counterinsurgency operations and airlift and sealift capabilities were reconstructed to support the larger aim of building a capable conventional force. In addition, the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) was articulated as official policy. In this scenario, strategists conceded that the Soviets could strike a devastating blow. No one would win in a nuclear war.

- **Realistic Deterrence (also called the Nixon doctrine).** By the 1960s, Americans were confronted with a new global reality. China had detonated its first nuclear weapon, the Soviet Union continued to grow in strength, and the US was embroiled in Vietnam. With little to no public or Congressional support, the military establishment was forced to readjust its deterrence strategy. President Nixon summarized this shift in US policy: “…the United States will participate in the defense and development of allies and friends, but…America cannot—and will not—conceive all plans, design all programs, execute all the decisions, and undertake all the defense of the free nations of the world.”

The United States widened its nuclear umbrella and started the Security Assistance Program (SAP), designed to provide aid to US allies. Similar to the Marshall Plan, the US sent hardware and economic aid to countries to better resist communism. However, the US would not supply the majority of personnel if a conflict erupted.
Essential equivalence became an accepted aspect of realistic deterrence. The Soviet Union had more nukes and their warheads were bigger, but the United States had more accurate weapons.

- **Contemporary Containment (Reagan Doctrine).** In 1981, the United States underwent a dramatic change. President Reagan came into office and dramatically restored the military’s image and respect. His administration was also much more outspoken and aggressive in dealings with the Soviet Union; in 1983, President Reagan called the Soviet Union the “Evil Empire.” During Reagan’s eight years in office, Congress increased defense spending from $277 billion in 1981 to $371 billion in 1989. For almost three successive years, military personnel received significant pay raises. Numerous programs were restarted like the B-1 bomber and several new programs, like the Strategic Defense Initiative, were supported. American involvement in the Security Assistance Program, begun under President Nixon, increased. The United States provided billions of dollars in foreign aid, support, and loans in order to develop strong allies that could resist communism on their own. The United States also began to insist that its allies, such as Japan and Western Europe, share the burden of their own defense.

**Post-Containment Era**

The year of 1989 marked a dramatic change in world history. The Warsaw Pact disintegrated as Eastern Europeans asserted their independence from the Soviet Union. By 1991, the Soviet Union, our nemesis for over four decades, dissolved. Although the Cold War was over, new challenges appeared that demanded cooperative, multinational solutions. According to the 1999 National Security Strategy, the United States sought to enhance America’s security, bolster America’s economic prosperity, and promote democracy and human rights abroad. In addition, the Department of Defense wanted to maintain a military force capable of simultaneously fighting in two major theater wars. One scenario that was explored was concurrent fighting in Iraq and North Korea. However, real-world operations such as ALLIED FORCE in 1999 stretched our forces to an extent that senior leaders were forced to reevaluate the plausibility of the two-theater war concept. Even though great uncertainty existed about the form of future threats, senior leaders set out some definite foreign policy concerns:

- Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation and nuclear security
- Regional stability
- Ballistic missiles
- Force protection
- Humanitarian concerns
Preemptive Strike (Bush Doctrine)

Following the devastating terrorist attacks on the American homeland on September 11, 2001, President Bush quickly established a foreign policy intolerant of terrorists and the states that harbor or support them. This doctrine was formalized in the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) and reaffirmed in the 2006 NSS. It declared the first duty of the United States Government to protect the American people and American interests. This duty obligated the government to anticipate and counter threats, using all elements of national power, before those threats could do grave damage.

Key aspects of the Bush Doctrine included championing human dignity, strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism, preventing our enemies from threatening us with weapons of mass destruction, expanding the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy, and transforming America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

National Renewal and Global Leadership (Obama Doctrine)

President Obama outlined his foreign policy ideals in the 2010 and 2015 iterations of the NSS. Both strategies lay out four enduring national interests around which the US focuses in the pursuit of building the world we seek.

Security. The security of the United States, its citizens, and US allies and partners. It is accomplished through:

- Strengthening security and resilience at home
- Disrupting, dismantling, and defeating Al-Qa’ida and its violent extremist affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the world
- Use of force
- Reversing the spread of nuclear and biological weapons and securing nuclear materials
- Advancing peace, security, and opportunity in the Greater Middle East
- Investing in the capacity of strong and capable partners
- Securing cyberspace

Prosperity. A strong, innovative, and growing US economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity. This involves:

- Strengthening education and human capital
- Enhancing science, technology, and innovation
- Achieving balanced and sustainable growth
• Accelerating sustainable development
• Spending taxpayers’ dollars wisely

**Values.** Respect for universal values at home and around the world. To do this we must:
• Strengthen the power of our example
• Promote democracy and human rights abroad
• Promote dignity by meeting basic needs

**International Order.** An international order advanced by US leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges. This requires that we:
• Ensure strong alliances
• Build cooperation with other twenty-first century centers of influence
• Strengthen institutions and mechanisms for cooperation
• Sustain broad cooperation on key global challenges

What we have learned so far is that policy establishes WHAT our leadership expects. Strategy determines HOW we implement the policy. While strategy development is occurring, it must conform to the policy established by our civilian leadership. Once a country determines its national objectives, it must start developing a grand strategy that summarizes its plan to achieve its objectives.

**NATIONAL SECURITY OBJECTIVES**

There are three areas of interest taken into consideration when developing national objectives: vital national interests, major interests, and peripheral interests.

National objectives are an extension of vital national interests. The idea of a vital national interest is unique to international politics and is defined by two characteristics: first, a vital interest is an interest on which the nation is unwilling to compromise; second, a vital interest is one over which a nation would go to war.

The highest vital interest for any country is its survival; however, this is not to say that survival is the only vital interest. For example, we view territorial integrity as a vital interest and would retaliate against any country that aggressively attacks American soil.

Below vital national interests, countries have major interests. Major interests are those that, when compromised, can result in serious harm to the nation. A country may take strong measures, including the use of force, to protect major interests, but in most cases the use of force is not necessary.
The third level of interest is peripheral. These are situations where some national interest is involved, but the nation as a whole is not particularly affected by any given outcome.

GRAND STRATEGY

Grand Strategy includes the development, coordination, and use of all national power instruments (economic, information, political, and military). The United States’ Grand Strategy is explicitly written down in the National Security Strategy. This document, produced by the White House, seeks to maintain US interaction with the world community and increase the size and strength of free market democracies.

Understanding Strategy

The US government can definitely control the political and military instruments of national power and, to a lesser extent, the economic instrument. In order for us to achieve our objectives in the most efficient manner possible, our political and military leaders must be intimately familiar with all of the instruments of national power.

From a military perspective, it’s essential for us to understand that we are not the only method available to achieve a national objective. Sometimes economic or political policy can achieve an objective in a less costly manner. For example, an economic embargo or diplomatic negotiation may convince a country to change its behavior before we go to war. It’s also critical for Airmen to understand Grand Strategy so that military strategy can be developed that does not conflict with political and economic strategies.
MILITARY STRATEGY

Military strategy, the art and science of coordinating the development, deployment, and employment of military forces to achieve national security objectives, is the application of Grand Strategy in the military realm. Both the National Security Strategy and National Defense Strategy provide overall guidance for United States’ Military Strategy.

National Security Strategy (NSS)

The NSS originated from the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 (Goldwater-Nichols Act) and is issued by the President to the Congress, and the Secretary of Defense. It addresses US interests, goals, and objectives; the policies, worldwide commitments, and capabilities required to meet those objectives; and the use of element of national power to achieve those goals. It also must provide an assessment of associated risks.

Supplementing the NSS is the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), an internal Department of Defense (DoD) process designed to formulate National Defense Strategy, and to determine the policies, approaches, and organization required to achieve that strategy, in broad support of national security strategy.

Once the President has articulated the NSS, the Department of Defense has a basic vector. The Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), with the aid of the QDR, further defines those instructions to illustrate how the DoD will approach those challenges.

National Defense Strategy (NDS)

The National Defense Strategy articulates the “ends” that the DoD will pursue to help execute the National Security Strategy, together with the “ways,” and “means,” that the DoD will use to do so. Both the National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy provide guidance on when, where, and how forces should be employed. Although it is not very detailed, it does provide insight into what we consider to be vital national interests.

National Military Strategy (NMS)

At this level, the National Military Strategy concerns the organized application of military means in support of the broader national (political) objectives. Prepared by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), the NMS is required to be consistent with the most recent NSS, the most recent QDR, and with “any other national security or defense strategic guidance issued by the President or the Secretary of Defense.” Hence, the NSS is distilled through the QDR process to become the NDS, and that in turn is ultimately refined to the NMS.
The NMS consists of four distinct elements:

**Force Employment.** This refers to the use of forces in a broad, national sense. An example of such a use of force can be derived from reviewing US military strategy during the 1930s prior to the US entry into World War II. An isolationist policy was in effect with US military forces primarily engaged in defense of the homeland and its territories against Nazi-Germany and Imperial Japan. Employment decisions are based on the perceived threat and address two questions:

- Where would forces be employed? This question is concerned with whether military forces are required for direct homeland defense or for the projection of power across the globe to protect US national interest around the world.
- Against whom would forces be employed? The answer to this question drives not only Force Employment, but also Force Development and Force Deployment. Knowing the enemy enables you to understand how they are armed, with how much armament, their manner of employing forces, and ultimately how to counter their threat.

**Force Development.** While Force Employment broadly determines what needs to be done, where it needs to be done, and how it needs to be done, Force Development concerns resources for getting the job done. How much, what kind, and how these resources are molded and shaped into a force structure are the dictates for Force Development. The build-up of the Air Corps in the mid-1930s and before World War II, with air doctrine and aircraft development and production during the Roosevelt Administration, is one of many examples of applied Force Development.

**Force Deployment.** Who is the enemy and where those forces will be employed are the driving factors to Force Deployment. During the 1930s, Nazi-Germany and Imperial Japanese forces were invading and occupying Europe and Asia. Their actions relative to US geography played an important role in US military Force Deployment before World War II. Other factors, such as time, vulnerability, and flexibility influence Force Deployment. Moving troops forward or overseas reduces time in responding to enemy actions but also may expose those same forces to risks and vulnerabilities. It can also limit the flexibility to respond to other locations, or “hot spots,” in the region or around the globe.

**Coordination of Actions.** While all three parts of military strategy—Force Employment, Development, and Deployment—are interrelated they require coordination in order to manage the risk of emerging threats. Asymmetrical threats, such as trans-national terrorist organizations, cyber-attacks from rogue nation-states, state-sponsor, supported or affiliated groups, or economic sabotage or subversion by rival global competitors require different military strategies to defeat those threats. No nation has all the resources and unlimited will to thwart every threat. Hence a nation must identify their most pressing emerging threats and coordinate their Force Employment, Development, and Deployment to counter those enemies.
While our Grand and Military Strategies provide general guidance, each war and operation is unique. We are unlikely to quickly overwhelm our enemies as we did in Operation DESERT STORM since the environment and the enemy will be different. Our operational strategies focus on the overall goals for specific conflicts and theaters.

**Operational Strategy**

This is the art and science of planning, orchestrating, and directing military campaigns within a theater of operations to achieve national security objectives. Three sub-categories are:

- Combined campaigns involve the coordination of multiple nations. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM is a current example of a combined campaign.

- Joint campaigns coordinate the efforts between the three US military departments. The joint campaign must be integrated with the combined campaign and achieve the US political objectives. Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, our war in Afghanistan, is an example of a joint campaign.

- Component campaigns are environment specific campaigns. For example, the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) is responsible for all air operations within a given theater. Component campaigns must be coordinated with both joint and combined campaigns, and the air campaign must support the Joint Force Commander’s (JFC) objectives.

The essence of the operational strategy is to orchestrate all of these different levels of strategy and integrate them to deter conflicts, maximize our fighting potential, and limit casualties. Operational level strategy may or may not involve a shooting war. Contingency operations are the most common mission at the operational level. The goal at the operational level of war is to win the theater war. In conducting the operations, we make certain assumptions about winning the war. First, winning the theater war achieves a desired military objective. Second, achievement of goals set out in the grand strategy.

When we descend to the next level of the strategy making process, we finally arrive at the point where military forces are actually tasked with executing the operation. This is where you will probably find yourself as a lieutenant or a captain.

**Battlefield Strategy**

This is the art and science of employing forces on the battlefield to achieve national security objectives. Strategies at the tactical level change very quickly as the enemy counters our current tactics with modified tactics of their own.

It’s virtually impossible for us to discuss battlefield tactics in general terms because of the diversity in operations. We could explore the tactics for nuclear war, contingency operations, protracted revolutionary war, conventional war, air war, space war, information war, amphibious assaults, and desert war. However, as a junior officer, you will most
likely only indirectly participate in strategy development. Realize that you will be charged with implementing these policies and leading others in implementing these policies. The better you understand the strategy and policy process, the better you will be able to draw the connection between your unit’s duties and US national objectives.

The strategy process copes with the complex context of the modern age and accomplishes the same function as that performed almost intuitively by the warriors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, the lessons of the past are always suspect in the present because all conflicts are different—doctrine application and strategy development requires informed judgment. Certain principles—like unity of command, objective, and offensive—have stood the test of time; while other ideas—like unescorted daytime bombing, decentralized command and the preeminence of nuclear weapons—have not. If we ignore the potential of space and information operations and the strategic natures of air, space, and cyberspace power, we may commit the same sins as our forbearers. If we ignore the reality that adaptive, thinking adversaries will seek asymmetric strategies, anti-access capabilities, and favorable arenas within which to influence and engage us, we risk catastrophic surprise. Tomorrow, a new set of conditions and requirements will prevail. In fact, new conditions and environments are already emerging. The best defense is a commitment to learn from experience and to exploit relevant ideas and new technologies so we may be the masters of our future while maintaining those fundamental principles that remain constant over time.

Bibliography: