



# NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

**Institute for National Strategic Studies**

Interim Research Work Plan

Fiscal Year 2018





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## Introduction

This document summarizes an interim INSS research work plan for fiscal year (FY) 2018 and is based on priorities provided by senior Pentagon and National Defense University (NDU) leadership. While the Department of Defense (DOD) has published a National Military Strategy, the National Defense Strategy is not yet complete but we expect to see the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's guidance on professional military education (PME) within the year. NDU offers this interim research plan based on existing guidance and will update the plan when additional guidance is released.

The INSS mission is to conduct research in support of the academic and leader development programs at NDU, to provide strategic support to the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and unified combatant commands, and to interact with other U.S. Government agencies and the broader national security community. INSS research is carried out by the Institute's four centers: the Center for Strategic Research (CSR), Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction (CSWMD), Center for Complex Operations (CCO), and Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs (CSCMA). NDU Press, a component of INSS, publishes *Joint Force Quarterly* and INSS research.

The Chairman and senior leaders at NDU have reiterated that senior leader development/joint PME is the first and most important responsibility for the research component. Accordingly, our research supports the University's goal to provide a transformational student experience either directly through teaching, supervising student research projects, or curriculum development, or indirectly through developing faculty who are thought leaders and routinely contribute to the most vexing policy solutions faced by national security leaders.

## Direct Support for Academics

This past year marked a significant change in the INSS approach to supporting NDU academics and the development of the next generation of national security leaders. Beginning in academic year 2017–2018, all direct-funded research faculty are expected either to teach or to respond to University college requests for curriculum development products. Currently, we have 14 research faculty members scheduled to teach core courses and 4 who were invited by the Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy to draft curriculum development documents. We are institutionalizing this change through an annual process that will match research faculty with the teaching demands of the college.

INSS researchers will continue to offer a number of electives open to all NDU students at the Fort Lesley J. McNair campus. In addition to direct teaching support, INSS researchers will continue to guest lecture, provide publications in support of NDU courses, and serve as student mentors. INSS will also continue to play a leading role in implementing the NDU Combatant Commander Scholars Program, pioneered by CSCMA in collaboration with U.S. Pacific Command, and expanded to include U.S. European Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Strategic Command, and U.S. Transportation Command. In keeping with this role, our researchers will conduct an annual assessment of the efficacy and scope of the program. In addition to the Combatant Commander Scholars Program, 13 students signed up to complete a research project in place of an elective, and INSS researchers will help to guide these students through the process. We anticipate filling this role even more fully in the years to come. Finally, our researchers will support the Eisenhower School's efforts to evolve the Industry Studies program by providing strategic advice and building mechanisms to incorporate the findings of student seminars into an annual report for the CJCS that informs DOD choices on industrial base policy. We expect that this work will evolve and expand in the years to come.

## Influential Research

A high-quality research program is essential for maintaining a cadre of thought leaders that not only contributes to a relevant curriculum but also supports senior DOD decisionmakers. NDU's research must conform to challenging research standards, including rigorous peer reviews and security reviews. Research topics address many of the most difficult policy dilemmas currently facing senior leadership, as well as a variety of over-the-horizon issues that will drive future choices. Research topics prioritize the needs of the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and combatant commanders. Occasionally, INSS researchers will also respond to requests from other national security stakeholders including defense agencies and, in selected cases, interagency partners. INSS's research capability provides DOD an in-house think tank capability that produces high-quality, responsive products at a fraction of the price. Our research activities are also critical to the University's classroom experience by developing instructors and instructional material that bring our cutting-edge policy experience and research excellence into the classroom.

Last year, INSS began an intense review of the type of projects that the organization accepted for reimbursable funding. The purpose of this review was to ensure that NDU was only accepting work that meets the aforementioned criteria and that INSS could execute on time and according to its research standards. As a result, INSS stood down the Center for Technology and National Security Policy. NDU leadership and the office of Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L)



also reevaluated the University's role in supporting the MD5 National Security Technology Accelerator (MD5). While MD5 provides a noble catalyst for defense innovation, the majority of its mission is well outside what NDU can execute or oversee. NDU is currently working with AT&L to shape a project on inculcating technological innovation into PME. That proposal and an associated memorandum of agreement should be developed in the fall of 2017. More broadly, over the next year INSS will consider options for developing an organic technology and national security policy research capability leveraging experts from NDU's faculty.

## Research Guidance

The University's research plan is informed by DOD strategic guidance and regular contacts with Defense policymakers. Currently that guidance consists of the regional priorities of the Chairman's "four-plus-one" construct and the documented priorities of the Secretary of Defense. We used these two main sources to draft this interim guidance.

### Regional Priorities: CJCS Four-Plus-One Construct<sup>1</sup>

The University's perspective on the Chairman's regional priorities are summarized below.

**Russia** is a revanchist power that is motivated by real and perceived existential threats. The Russian government seeks to delegitimize selected Western and liberal democratic national governments and longstanding international organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union through the use of "political warfare" and grey zone operations. These operations are designed to stay below the threshold that could trigger a NATO or American military response. Russia's increasingly experienced and adaptive military was deployed extensively in several different operations between 2014 and 2017 and remains a major threat to the United States and its allies. Russia's possession of nuclear weapons, cyberwarfare operations, and the breaching of NATO airspace and naval boundaries present additional risks.

**China** is less bellicose than Russia, but its expanding economy and improving technology base are producing impressive advances in military capabilities. China has acted in increasingly provocative ways to increase its presence and advance its maritime claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea. Chinese investments in antiaccess/area-denial capabilities and increasingly capable naval, air, and missile forces pose significant challenges to the U.S. military's ability to conduct combat operations in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, ongoing organizational and doctrinal reforms have the potential to significantly enhance the Chinese military's ability to conduct integrated joint operations beyond China's borders. China is also using economic and diplomatic tools to expand

its influence within and beyond Asia, including the Belt and Road Initiative focused on building regional infrastructure.

*Iran* has partially reintegrated into the community of nations with the signing and adherence (to date) of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or the Iran Nuclear Deal. Yet Tehran continues to challenge U.S. interests in the Middle East and those of its allies by extending its sphere of influence in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen through support of Hezbollah, Hamas, and other Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp–backed militias. It is also expanding its ballistic missile program.

*North Korea* has been a menace to its neighbors and a source of instability in Northeast Asia for years. Kim Jong-un has redoubled efforts to improve nuclear weapons and long-range missile capabilities, and North Korea is well on the way to developing nuclear-armed missiles that can reach the continental United States. The United States, the Republic of Korea, and Japan should be prepared with measures to enhance deterrence and defenses, deal with potential conventional and nuclear provocations, and cooperate to address issues related to instability or regime collapse in North Korea.

*Violent Extremism* by nonstate actors continues to pose a serious threat to the U.S. homeland, overseas U.S. locations, and our allies. The most prominent is external operations conducted by transregional groups, such as the so-called Islamic State (IS) and al Qaeda. External operations are enabled by a global facilitation network, which sometimes includes criminal organizations. IS also has taken advantage of new technologies, such as deploying drones on battlefields, inspiring homegrown attacks via Facebook, and guiding remote attacks with point-to-point encryption apps. IS and al Qaeda also pose serious threats to American allies worldwide.

## DOD: The Secretary's Priorities<sup>2</sup>

The second source of research guidance for this interim research plan is derived from the Secretary of Defense's priorities.

***Maintain a Reliable and Modernized Strategic Deterrent.*** Since the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons have remained a foundational element of U.S. strategy for deterring strategic attacks and large-scale war on the United States and its allies. Maintaining effective nuclear deterrence is an absolute imperative, and it is the highest priority mission of DOD. Effective deterrence requires a modern nuclear force that is robust, flexible, resilient, ready, and appropriately tailored to deter 21<sup>st</sup>-century threats.

***Build a More Lethal Conventional Force.*** Over 15 years of sustained operations have created a combat-experienced force; however, that experience came at the cost of maintaining full-spectrum capabilities and investing in next-generation warfare. DOD will look for the right balance between

investments current and future force requirements with the goal of ensuring that military's size and composition are adequate to the task at hand.

***Maintain Irregular Warfare as a Competency.*** While it is important that we invest in technology and readiness for high-end threats, we must ensure that recovering these capabilities does not come at the cost of the capabilities for irregular warfare; we must be ready to fight across the full spectrum of war. Capabilities for irregular warfare must also include capacity for postconflict stability operations.

***Enhance/Strengthen Allies and Partners.*** The United States will support activities that improve the military capacity of other states in order to help them become more reliable and effective partners on security matters.

***Reform Institutional Practices.*** DOD will look across components and organizations to inform a strategic and realistic plan of potential reforms. Those reforms will favor functions that increase lethality of the force and eliminate those that are duplicative and unnecessary.

## Additional Guidance

INSS researchers are also in regular contact with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and combatant commanders and their staffs in their areas of expertise, which ensures that directed and non-directed research is relevant to the concerns of defense policymakers and other senior leaders.

## Research Themes for FY 2018

The above guidance informs the development of the INSS research themes listed below. The holistic brief that accompanies this research plan details individual FY 2018 research projects and links them to one or more of these research themes.

1. Inform U.S. policies—collaborative and competitive—toward Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and violent extremist organizations.
2. Ensure the effectiveness of U.S. military capabilities now and in the future through balanced investments in current readiness and modernization, effective joint force design, creative operating concepts, and disruptive technologies.
3. Ensure that the U.S. military maintains an effective irregular warfare capability that includes postconflict stability operations.
4. Develop concepts for tailoring deterrence to 21<sup>st</sup>-century requirements and implement

strategies that strengthen the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

5. Mitigate global weapons of mass destruction and cyber threats.

6. Identify high-return investments in strengthening the capabilities of traditional allies and emerging defense and security partners, especially in:

- a. Europe
- b. Indo-Asia-Pacific
- c. Middle East
- d. Space and cyberspace arenas.

7. Develop and implement institutional and operational reform strategies that increase the lethality of the force given anticipated budget realities.

8. Assess ways to improve interagency decision making and implementation to support themes 1 through 7.

9. Develop a deep understanding of the current and future security environment as it pertains to themes 1 through 8.

## Final Thoughts

The annual research plan provides a framework to guide our efforts through the coming year, but we acknowledge the requirement to remain flexible and highly responsive to customer needs. INSS research leaders maintain an ongoing dialogue with DOD and NDU senior leaders in order to continually reassess how best to meet evolving requirements. INSS considers this research plan a living document and will review and update as needed based on current events and higher level guidance.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> General Joseph Dunford, Jr., “From the Chairman: Strategic Challenges and Implications,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 83 (4th Quarter 2016), available at <<http://ndupress.ndu.edu/JFQ/Joint-Force-Quarterly-83/>>.

<sup>2</sup> “James N. Mattis Senate Armed Services Committee Nomination Hearing Statement,” testimony before the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, January 12, 2017, available at <[www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mattis\\_01-12-17.pdf](http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Mattis_01-12-17.pdf)>.



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