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**The United States National Security Strategy (2025): analysis and comparison with the NSS 2022**

## The United States National Security Strategy (2025): analysis and comparison with the NSS 2022

### Abstract:

The publication of the 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS) by the US Administration marks a turning point in US strategic doctrine. The document represents an explicit break with the globalist, interventionist approach that was theoretically respectful of the rules-based international order that had governed the world since the early 1990s. The new strategy redefines both US vital interests and the means to ensure its security, introducing a conceptual framework that combines geopolitical realism, national sovereignty, economic competitiveness and selective regional priorities.

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## 1. Introduction

The publication of the 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS) by the US Administration marks a turning point in US strategic doctrine. The document represents an explicit break with the globalist, interventionist approach that was theoretically respectful of the rules-based international order that had governed the world since the early 1990s. The new strategy redefines both US vital interests and the means to ensure its security, introducing a conceptual framework that combines geopolitical realism, national sovereignty, economic competitiveness and selective regional priorities. It argues that previous strategies failed because they were mere wish lists, without clear priorities and based on flawed assumptions. The essential objective of this new Strategy is to correct these errors in order to usher in a new 'Golden Age' for the country.

## 2. Essential elements of the 2025 National Security Strategy

### 2.1 Conceptual framework and diagnosis

The NSS-2025 starts from a severe self-criticism: post-Cold War US strategies have artificially expanded the concept of 'national interest', diluting priorities and leading to costly and unhelpful military interventions. In contrast, the new doctrine establishes a guiding principle: only vital interests should guide foreign policy, and these interests are defined in relation to:

- Protection of sovereignty and borders.
- Defence of the population and territorial integrity.
- Economic, energy, and industrial security.
- Preservation of the American way of life and cultural identity.

The strategy also states the need to rebuild the industrial, energy and technological base to sustain military and economic superiority.

## 2.2 Regional approach

### a) Western Hemisphere

The doctrine of spheres of influence returns. America is the absolute strategic priority. The document explicitly introduces a so-called 'Trump Corollary' to the Monroe Doctrine, according to which it is essential to:

- Contain the influence of rival powers (China, Russia, Iran).
- Control irregular migration flows.
- Protect critical infrastructure and strategic resources.

This is a clear return to a defensive hemispheric hegemony whereby the US will not accept the influence of any other hegemon than itself in its own backyard. It explicitly excludes the possible presence of China, Russia or Iran.

### b) Indo-Pacific

The most important external geopolitical priority. Geo-economic and maritime security variables predominate: supply chains, strategic minerals, freedom of navigation and deterrence against China, especially in the Taiwan Strait. It is essential to maintain the possibility of supplies to the Pacific from the "first island chain".

### c) Europe

The strategy formulates the European objective in a very different way from the classic 'transatlantic' rhetoric: the US says it wants to support its allies in preserving the freedom and security of Europe, while restoring European civilisational confidence and Western identity. But it does so on the basis of the following surprising situational diagnosis

- Economic diagnosis

Continental Europe has gone from accounting for 25% of global GDP in 1990 to 14% today. This is attributed to national and supranational regulations that stifle creativity and economic endeavour. The EU's hyper-regulation.

- Diagnosis of danger to Western civilisation

The ESN describes it as a "prospect of civilisational erasure": a frontal critique of the EU and other transnational bodies for eroding political freedom and sovereignty. The decline is linked to migration policies that "transform the continent" and generate conflict, extremely low birth rates and the loss of national identities and collective self-esteem, and they vigorously attack what they call "censorship of freedom of expression and repression of the opposition".

The key phrase: if current trends continue, the continent will be "unrecognisable" in about two decades; it even questions whether some countries will remain strong allies.

Regarding Russia and the war in Ukraine, they acknowledge that many Europeans see Russia as an existential threat, but they emphasise that Europe has clear material superiority over Moscow (except in the nuclear sphere). In view of this, they declare that it is in the US's central interest to negotiate a rapid cessation of hostilities in Ukraine in order to: stabilise European economies, avoid unwanted escalations, restore strategic stability with Russia, and enable the reconstruction of Ukraine as a viable state. In short, the US must resolve this issue quickly in order to focus its efforts on the Indo-Pacific.

Europe is therefore a necessary partner, but it is in a dangerous internal crisis that threatens its very existence. Despite the bleak diagnosis, they insist that Europe remains strategically and culturally vital: transatlantic trade, industry, technology and culture. They refuse to "write off" Europe: that would be self-defeating, because a strong Europe is needed to compete globally.

They call for support for 'patriotic parties' and political forces that promote a revival of national pride and European spirit.

At the end of the chapter, a list of priorities for US policy towards Europe is set out: stability with Russia, Europe as a group of sovereign nations that defend themselves, opening up European markets to the US, strengthening the 'healthy' countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe, and 'ending the perception and reality of NATO as a permanently expanding alliance'.

### 3. What does this approach mean for Europe's role?

#### 3.1 From 'pillar of the liberal order' to 'civilisation at risk'

Biden's ESN-2022 described Europe and NATO as the core of the democratic order, with an explicit defence of enlargement and the central role of the EU and multilateral institutions.

The 2025 NSS, on the other hand:

- It mistrusts European "transnationalism" (EU, ECHR, supranational bureaucracies), which it accuses of undermining sovereignty and freedoms.
- Sees Europe less as a laboratory for advanced liberal democracy and more as a demographic-cultural battleground: birth rates, immigration, identity, freedom of expression.
- It places the civilisational issue on the same level as the strictly military one.

In other words, Europe is no longer primarily a "normative actor" but rather an allied civilisation that must be rescued from its own drift.

#### 3.2. Relationship with NATO and European defence

There are two very clear messages:

1. Europe must shoulder the main burden of its own defence, regardless of US support

The strategy calls for Europe to "stand up" as a group of aligned sovereign nations that assume primary responsibility for their own security, without being dominated by adversarial powers.

2. An end to the indefinite expansion of NATO.

It literally proposes to "end the perception, and prevent the reality, of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance", which implies a break with the cycle of post-Cold War enlargements and sends a clear and negative signal to the aspirations of Ukraine and other candidates.

Combined with the current context of NATO (5% of GDP for defence as a target for 2035, doubts about the continuity of the US commitment, pressure on the "European pillar"), the projection is of a frozen NATO focused on Europeans in terms of burden sharing.

### 3.3 *Europe as an economic and technological 'multiplier' if it changes course*

The text emphasises that Europe remains central to Western trade, technology and culture, and that the US wants to open up European markets further to its goods and services, ensuring fair treatment for US workers and companies.

To this end, it proposes to "develop healthy nations in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe" through economic ties, arms sales, political cooperation and cultural and educational exchanges.

In other words, if Europe corrects its drift (in terms of regulation, energy, migration, demographics and sovereignty), it can become a multiplier of Western power vis-à-vis China, Russia and others. If it does not, it becomes a weakened partner that would drag the US down in terms of costs and vulnerabilities.

## 4. Russia, Ukraine and "strategic stability" in the 2025 vision

The chapter on Europe does not present Ukraine's victory as an absolute priority, but rather aspires to a swift cessation of hostilities, with three objectives: to stabilise the European economy, reduce the risk of escalation and re-establish strategic stability with Russia.

After this, the reconstruction of Ukraine as a viable state would be addressed, but without explicitly linking this to its entry into NATO/EU.

The Strategy calls for a rewriting of the European-Russian relationship in terms of classic balance of power, rather than existential confrontation. This is a clear shift from the language of 2022 ("Russia as an immediate threat" and "support for Ukraine for as long as necessary") and confirms that for Washington, the main risk is no longer Russia, but the combination of a prolonged war with a weak Europe in need of American support, deindustrialised and divided.

The EU appears more as a problem than a solution. Its "transnationalism" is linked to the erosion of sovereignty, excessive regulation, uncontrolled migration policies and censorship.

ESN-2025 wants to reform or contain these structures so that they cease to "drain sovereignty" and truly serve national interests, starting with those of the US.

The US no longer automatically aligns itself with pro-integration European elites, but declares itself sympathetic to "patriotic parties" and Eurosceptic/national-conservative movements that assert their own identity and sovereignty.

To put it bluntly, the document politically legitimises European forces that question the current trajectory of the EU.

The reference to "the healthy countries of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe" places Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, etc., in the group in which the US wants to invest political, economic and military capital.

In relation to our country

- Southern flank and Atlantic:

Spain would gain relevance as a western anchor in the western Mediterranean, the Strait and the Atlantic (Rota, Morón, Canary Islands), in a context in which the US wants energy autonomy, control of routes and containment of Russian and Chinese influence in Africa and the Sahel.

- Bridge with Latin America and Africa:

The US's hemispheric and African priority fits in with Spain's traditional projection, which opens up scope for enhanced coordination between Madrid and Washington on supply chains, critical minerals, energy and stability in Latin America and the Sahel.

- Defence reindustrialisation:

The US commitment to robust industrial bases and to rearming its allies opens up space for Spain to strengthen its industrial base (naval, aerospace, land, command and control, etc.) in both NATO and EU-Defence terms.

In the ESN-2025, Europe ceases to be the central theatre of military deployment and becomes a sister civilisation, essential for global competition, but one that is required to

defend itself, heal its economy, recover its identity and renounce the automatism of NATO enlargements and institutional transnationalism.

## **5. Theoretical affiliation: What geopolitical doctrine underpins the ESN-2025?**

The strategy clearly stands outside traditional liberal internationalism and aligns itself with a combination of three currents:

Offensive realism / selective primacy

- Defence of military and technological superiority.
- Priority on preventing rival powers from dominating key regions.

Adapted offshore balancing

- The US would only intervene directly when the balance of power demanded it.
- Delegation of security to allies (Europe, Japan) while focusing on its vital priorities.

Strategic national industrialism

- Sovereignty and economic and technological power as the core of national power.
- Cultural and identity protection as an explicit element of security.

In doctrinal terms, ESN-2025 represents the first openly realist strategy and, I would dare say, the first civilisational supremacist y of the US since the beginning of the Cold War.

## **6. Analysis of the ESN 2025 from the point of view of its ENDS, MEANS and WAYS**

ESN 2025 profoundly redefines how the United States understands its position in the world and what objectives it considers truly vital. Its ENDS, or strategic ends, are no longer articulated around maintaining the liberal international order, but around a radical reassessment of the country's real interests. The absolute priority is now the internal security of the homeland, understood not only in territorial and economic terms, but also in cultural and identity terms. Protecting borders, curbing irregular immigration, ensuring social cohesion and regaining energy and industrial autonomy have become central elements of what now constitutes the *raison d'être* of US foreign policy. National security

begins at home, and everything else—including historical alliances and commitments—is subordinate to this premise.

From this inner core, the document identifies two other essential goals. The first is to maintain strategic military superiority over China, considered the most relevant competitor in economic, technological and military terms. Unlike

previous approaches, this rivalry is not presented as an ideological conflict between political models, but as a struggle for control of critical supply chains, maritime routes, strategic minerals, and industrial and military superiority. The Indo-Pacific remains the priority external theatre: freedom of navigation, global economic resilience and Washington's ability to prevent China from imposing regional hegemony are at stake there. The second structural goal is the containment of revisionist powers, especially Russia, Iran and North Korea. But this containment is being redefined: the aim is not to achieve absolute victory over Moscow or to prolong the war in Ukraine indefinitely, but to restore a stable balance of power as soon as possible that will allow the United States to free up resources, reduce the risks of escalation and prevent the strategic collapse of a weakened Europe.

These goals require MEANS that are profoundly different from those employed in previous decades. The ESN-2025 calls for a substantial increase in defence spending, but not to sustain long wars on several continents, but to revitalise the military industrial base and ensure the capacity for mass production in the event of a major conflict. A national-industrialist vision of power is re-emerging: the United States cannot depend on vulnerable global supply chains and is therefore prioritising domestic development of semiconductors, energy, AI applied to defence, munitions and naval capabilities. Technology takes on a central strategic status: it is not only a military multiplier, but also a pillar of sovereignty. Alongside this, the strategy adopts coercive and transactional diplomacy, in which US support—military, economic, political—is explicitly conditional on concrete contributions from partners and allies. Values-based diplomacy disappears; diplomacy based on reciprocity, pressure and cost-benefit emerges. Latin America and Europe receive this message with particular clarity: anyone who wants Washington's support must align themselves with its strategic priorities, contribute to their own defence and open up economic spaces that benefit US industry.

With these means, the United States is implementing a series of WAYS, or modes of action, that mark a doctrinal shift towards classical realism. On the military front, deterrence is once again the fundamental mechanism: the aim is to raise the costs of enemy action to the point where it becomes untenable, especially in Taiwan and the first island chain. The goal is not necessarily to defeat China in a war, but rather

prevent it from daring to start one. In Europe, the strategy abandons the rhetoric of total confrontation with Russia. The preferred approach is no longer to sustain a prolonged war through an unlimited flow of aid to Ukraine, but to freeze the conflict on acceptable terms, stabilise the front and avoid a geopolitical erosion of Europe that distracts the United States from its real priority theatre. This approach is complemented by a systematic effort to shift burdens to allies: the defence of Europe must fall to Europe; the stability of the Mediterranean to Europeans and regional partners; migration control to actors in the Western Hemisphere; and the preservation of global prosperity to supply chains reconfigured around 'healthy' partners.

Competition with China is the thread that unifies all these movements. It is not presented as an ideological crusade, but as a race for economic, technological and maritime supremacy. To compete, the United States must redirect resources, reduce commitments in secondary regions and rebuild its own material power. To deter, it must strengthen alliances in Asia while demanding strategic autonomy from Europe. To contain revisionist powers, it must avoid endless wars that consume strategic energy without improving its relative position.

In short, the ESN-2025 strategic narrative describes a country that is reordering its foreign policy from within, refocusing on the Western Hemisphere, redefining its alliances in terms of reciprocity, and preparing for a scenario of prolonged competition between great powers in which economic, industrial, technological, and cultural power will be as decisive as military power. The revision of its ends, means, and methods points to a historic shift: the United States is ceasing to act as the global guarantor of the liberal order and is now operating as a realist power focused on preserving its internal and hemispheric hegemony in the face of an increasingly multipolar international system.

## 7. A brief comparative analysis of the ESN 2025-Trump versus the ESN 2022-Biden

### 7.1. Strategic philosophy: liberalism vs realism

#### ESN 2022 (Biden)

- Fully aligned with liberal internationalism.
- The world is divided between democracies and autocracies.
- The United States is the leader of the rules-based international order, whose mission is to preserve and strengthen it.
- Multilateral institutions (UN, NATO, EU, G7, WTO) are central tools.
- Optimistic view of globalisation as a source of prosperity.

#### ESN 2025

- This paradigm is explicitly dismantled: it is stated that previous strategies were wish lists disconnected from real US interests.
- A framework of geopolitical realism is adopted, focused on sovereignty, hard power, borders, industry and culture.
- The rules-based international order is not seen as a priority, and the importance of multilateral organisations is reduced.
- It introduces a new element: civilisational security (identity, demography, migration, cultural cohesion).

#### Doctrinal contrast

2022 = The United States as architect and guarantor of the liberal order.

2025 = The US as a sovereign power operating in a competitive system between great powers and spheres of influence.

### 7.2. China: systemic rival vs strategic competitor

#### ESN 2022

- China was the only competitor capable of reshaping the global order.
- The rivalry had an ideological component: democracy vs autocracy.
- The response included alliances, diplomacy, trade, technology and defence within a rules-based framework.

## ESN 2025

- China remains a priority, but the narrative has changed completely.
- The ideological dimension disappears: there is no talk of democracy versus autocracy.
- The focus is on supply chains, strategic mining, freedom of navigation, the Indo-Pacific and Taiwan.
- The objective is no longer to "maintain the liberal order," but to prevent Chinese hegemony in Asia.

## Contrast

2022 = systemic competition.

2025 = geo-economic and military competition.

### *7.3. Russia and Ukraine: strategic defeat vs rapid stability*

## ESN 2022

- Russia is the most serious immediate threat.
- Objective: to strategically weaken Moscow and ensure support for Ukraine "for as long as necessary".
- NATO enlargement is considered a historic success.

## ESN 2025

- The priority is no longer to defeat Russia, but to prevent a prolonged war from weakening Europe and diverting resources from Asia.
- The focus is on a rapid cessation of hostilities in Ukraine, strategic stabilisation and nuclear risk reduction.
- NATO must abandon the logic of "permanent expansion".

## Contrast

2022 = open confrontation, Ukraine as the main front.

2025 = freeze the conflict, restore balance, free up resources for China and the homeland.

### *7.4. Europe and NATO: pillar of the liberal order vs continent in civilisational crisis*

- Europe is the central pillar of the democratic order.
- The EU and NATO are essential and positive components of the Western system.
- Enlargement and the United States' commitment to European defence are being strengthened.

#### ESN 2025

- Severe diagnosis: Europe is undergoing a civilisational crisis (demographics, migration, hyper-regulation, erosion of sovereignty, censorship).
- The US does not intend to remain the primary guarantor of European security.
- Europe is being asked to "stand up" and take responsibility for its own defence.
- It rejects the continued expansion of NATO.

#### Contrast

2022 = strengthen NATO and Europe.

2025 = refocus NATO, stop expanding it and demand European autonomy.

#### *7.5. Western Hemisphere: secondary priority vs. main focus*

#### ESN 2022

- Moderate importance: cooperation, democracy, anti-corruption.
- Migration treated as a manageable challenge through multilateral cooperation.

#### ESN 2025

- The first strategic scenario is the Americas, the hemisphere.
- Return to a hard reading of the Monroe Doctrine ("Trump Corollary").
- Objectives:
  - o Contain China, Russia and Iran;
  - o control irregular migration;
  - o secure resources, critical infrastructure and energy sovereignty.

#### Contrast

2022 = hemisphere as an area of cooperation.

2025 = the hemisphere as an exclusive sphere of influence and absolute priority.

### *7.6. Internal security: democratic resilience vs. border, industry and identity*

ESN 2022

- Internal security defined by democratic resilience, climate change, public health, cybersecurity and domestic terrorism.
- Emphasis on democratic cohesion and combating disinformation.

ESN 2025

- Internal security = core of national strategy.
- Priorities: borders, crime, immigration control, energy, industry, cultural cohesion.
- The cultural/identity dimension becomes an explicit component of security.

Contrast

2022 = democratic resilience and human security.

2025 = territorial sovereignty, borders, industry and culture.

### *7.7. Economy and technology: global cooperation vs strategic national industrialism*

ESN 2022

- Open, global economy with reforms to protect the American middle class.
- Technological cooperation with allies and global governance of AI and value chains.

ESN 2025

- Massive reindustrialisation of defence, energy and high technology.
- Control of critical supply chains.
- Reduced dependence on China and limitation of supranational bodies that "drain sovereignty".
- Europe and its allies must open markets to the US and align themselves with US industrial priorities.

Contrast

2022 = cooperative international economy.

2025 = strategic protectionism and industrial sovereignty.

*7.8. Diplomacy: values vs. transaction*

ESN 2022

- Multilateral, cooperative diplomacy based on democratic values.
- Strengthening of international alliances and organisations.

ESN 2025

- Coercive and transactional diplomacy based on material interests.
- Aid and cooperation conditional on specific contributions (defence, trade liberalisation, migration control, geopolitical alignment).
- Political support for Eurosceptic "patriotic parties" that favour national sovereignty over supranational structures.

Contrast

2022 = diplomacy of alliances and norms.

2025 = diplomacy of compromise and pressure.

*7.9. Final summary of key differences ESN22\_ESN25*

Area	ESN 2022	ESN 2025
<b>Doctrine</b>	Liberal-internationalist	Offensive realism + sovereignty
<b>World order</b>	Defend and expand the rules-based order	Competition between powers and spheres of influence
<b>China</b>	Global systemic rival	Geo-economic-military competitor in Asia
<b>Russia/Ukraine</b>	Strategic defeat of Russia	Rapid ceasefire and balance
<b>Europe</b>	Democratic pillar	Continent in civilisational crisis
<b>NATO</b>	Expansion and reinforcement	End of expansion; Europe must defend itself
<b>Western Hemisphere</b>	Cooperation	Exclusive sphere of influence
<b>Internal security</b>	Democracy and resilience	Border, identity, industry
<b>Technology</b>	Shared governance	Technological autonomy and control

Area	ESN 2022	ESN 2025
Diplomacy	Cooperative in values	Transactional and coercive

## 8. Conclusions: Renewed isolationism, end of liberalism and return to hard realism

ESN-2025 marks a historic turning point: in practice, it represents the end of the liberal-internationalist cycle that defined US policy since 1991 and an explicit return to a logic of hard realism, focused on power, sovereignty, borders and spheres of influence. What emerges is not a mere tactical rectification, but a paradigm shift that reconfigures the role of the United States in the world.

The strategy abandons the idea of the United States leading a universalist and normative global order. That project—which had structured NATO expansion, the promotion of democracy, humanitarian interventions, and the defence of supranational institutions—is described as a historic mistake, an artificial expansion of the "national interest" that scattered priorities and weakened the country itself. Instead, ESN-2025 proposes a return to the traditional core of US national interest, understanding foreign policy as a strictly functional tool to protect internal security, industrial primacy, cultural cohesion, and hemispheric hegemony.

This is where the new isolationism is perceived, not as a complete withdrawal from the international stage, but as a drastic reduction in the scope of commitments. The absolute priority becomes the homeland and the Western Hemisphere, while Europe and the Middle East cease to be central theatres and become dependent on the capacity—and will—of local actors. Far from liberal internationalism, which sought strategic depth through interdependence, this strategy promotes selective isolationism: the United States will no longer support security structures that do not directly contribute to its position in the competition between great powers, especially against China.

This retreat from universalist engagement implies, by extension, the demise of strategic liberalism. Multinational institutions, NATO expansion, shared governance, the defence of democracy and normative multilateralism disappear as pillars. The document openly criticises transnationalism—particularly European transnationalism—for eroding national sovereignties, discouraging strategic autonomy and weakening collective identities. For the first time since the Second World War, Washington is not presenting itself as the guarantor of the international architecture, but as a power that is shirking its

role as 'global administrator' and putting its capacity for sovereign action above any supranational normative regime.

This shift consolidates the return of hard realism as the guiding framework. The strategy openly assumes that the international system is a space for competition between powers rather than a cooperative ecosystem regulated by universal norms. Security is defined in terms of balance of power, deterrence, containment and material supremacy, not a "rules-based" international order. Europe is described not as a normative partner, but as a weakened region whose demographic, migratory and regulatory crises place it on the brink of civilisational collapse. Russia is no longer the object of punishment, but rather an actor with whom it is necessary to restore classic strategic stability, based on limits, pragmatic agreements and recognition of spheres of influence.

From this perspective, Ukraine is no longer the emblem of the defence of democracy, but a conflict that must be resolved quickly to prevent Europe from sinking and dragging the United States into a strategic attrition incompatible with competition with China. Total victory is no longer an objective; risk management and the consolidation of balance replace the moralising ambition of liberalism.

Faced with this return to hard realism, selective isolationism functions as its operational complement: Washington maintains a presence where it is essential to preserve its primacy over China and ensure its internal sovereignty, but reduces or severely conditions its commitment in regions where the strategic benefit does not outweigh the cost. US foreign policy is no longer expansive but has become instrumental, defensive and transactional.

Overall, the ESN-2025 crystallises a doctrinal shift that breaks with three decades of liberal strategy and heralds a new era in which the United States no longer seeks to shape the world, but to protect its world. Hegemony is no longer conceived as moral or institutional leadership, but as the ability to impose costs, secure supply chains, control critical regions and prevent rivals from interfering in its hemisphere. It is the unambiguous reappearance of the realism of spheres of influence, a return to the power politics that the post-Cold War tried to leave behind, but which this strategy clearly vindicates.

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