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Professor Becky Rouse

Module 2: The Security Environment D14

10 June 2025

Session 2.2 DBF

Prompt

CLOs assessed by this DBF:

- Demonstrate the ability to apply critical and creative thinking.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate clearly and precisely.
- Analyze the changing global security environment and assess its impact on U.S. national security interests.
- Breakdown the key aspects of top-tier strategy documents and analyze their influence on the Department of Defense's role in achieving U.S. National Interests.

DBF 2.2 covers the topics and concepts discussed in sessions 2.1 through 2.4.

The DBFs in Module 2 provide students an opportunity to interact and discuss session concepts with the professor and fellow students. The DBFs also allow students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding and ability to effectively apply session concepts. DBF interaction is a significant part of the Program's requirements and is evaluated by the professor as part of the student's overall contribution grade.

For this DBF, each student's primary DBF post must be between 200-250 words in length and posted via Blackboard no later than 2359 Eastern Time on Tuesday of Week 7. Once a student has posted their primary post in Blackboard, the primary DBF posts of other students will become visible. Secondary DBF posts must be between 150-200 words in length and posted to Blackboard no later than 2359 Eastern Time on Thursday of Week 7.

Further guidance on DBFs can be found in paragraph 8.1 of the NC&S syllabus.

DBF 2.2 PRIMARY POST QUESTION:

Based on the student preparation materials covered in sessions 2.1 through 2.4, respond to the following question... The National Intelligence Council (NIC) publishes Global Trends every four years. The NIC purposely releases the document at the start of each new U.S. administration. The authors' intent is to provide policymakers with an "analytical framework" as they craft the national security strategy (NSS) (Global Trends 2040, p. v). As we learned in session 2.4, the NSS should, in the main, describe how ("the ways") the United States will act to advance its interests.

On pages 2 and 3, Global Trends 2040 identifies the five key themes or trends that, in the authors' assessment, will shape the strategic environment for the next two decades. Which of these key themes or trends does President Biden incorporate into the 2022 National Security Strategy? Does the 2022 NSS identify one theme or trend as more important than the others? Why or why not? Support your analysis with specific guidance from the relevant documents.

DBF 2.2 SECONDARY POST RESPONSE QUESTION:

Read all primary DBF posts from your classmates. In 150-200 words each, respond to two (2) separate student's primary posts and either reinforce, expand upon, or challenge the student's answer. Students must support (and cite) their responses using additional information from the applicable student preparation materials.

NOTE:

Although each student is required to respond to two (2) primary posts as a minimum, all students are encouraged to respond and offer substantive comments as outlined above to more than two posts, preferably a rebuttal to a student's secondary post. Additional student-to-student interaction that is of high quality will be weighted as additional credit towards the student's contribution grade.

Response

Primary Post (*by June 10, 2025*)

DBF 2.2 PRIMARY POST

In *Global Trends 2040*, the National Intelligence Council (NIC) identifies five key themes that will drive the strategic environment: global challenges, fragmentation, disequilibrium, contestation, and adaptation. While all five themes are present in the 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS), it has a focus on contestation and adaptation. Contestation, defined in *Global Trends 2040* as "rising tensions, division, and competition in societies, states, and at the international level" (National Intelligence Council, 2021, p. 3). The NSS works to the central organizing logic that "the post-Cold War era is definitively over" and that "a competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next" (White House, 2022, p. 6).

President Biden's NSS aligns closely with adaptation as well, especially in its recognition that "we are in the midst of a strategic competition to shape the future of the international order" and its commitment to "modernize the joint force to be lethal, resilient, sustainable, survivable, agile, and responsive," while also investing in resilience across climate, public health, and critical technologies (White House, 2022, pp. 2, 21). The NSS does not explicitly prioritize these trends, but its storyline suggests that contestation, particularly in the environment of strategic competition with China and Russia, serves as the predominant lens through which the other challenges are viewed. Ultimately, the 2022 NSS reflects a general alignment with *Global Trends 2040* but focuses its strategic energy toward managing intensifying global rivalry while preparing for systemic transformation.

References

National Intelligence Council. (2021). Global trends 2040: A more contested world.

https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf

White House. (2022). National security strategy. [https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-](https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf](https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf)

Secondary Post #1 (*by June 12, 2025*)

DBF 2.2 SECONDARY POST RESPONSE

Hey Daniel, great post. You did a good job linking contestation between both sources. That framing of strategic competition, particularly between democratic and autocratic systems, certainly runs through the NSS. The part where it states “a competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next” stood out to me as one of the more direct acknowledgments of that shift (White House, 2022, p. 6). I also appreciated how you brought in adaptability. This can get lost amid all the headline-grabbing discussion about China and Russia, but the NSS stresses the importance of resilience and flexibility in key domains such as technology, public health, and supply chains (White House, 2022, pp. 14–17). Your mention of climate change as a core security issue was on point, too. Global Trends 2040 highlights how national security will depend on “withstanding and adapting to these shared global challenges,” especially in fragile regions (National Intelligence Council, 2021, p. 2). All in all, you have a wonderful point that contestation is driving the larger strategy, but adaptivity and resilience are framed more as conditions for navigating through it. I look forward to more of your insights as the course progresses.

References

National Intelligence Council. (2021). Global trends 2040: A more contested world.

https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf

White House. (2022). National security strategy. [https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-](https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf)

[content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf](https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf)

Secondary Post #2 (*by June 12, 2025*)

DBF 2.2 SECONDARY POST RESPONSE

Great job, Candice! Your post was thoughtful and well-balanced, and you did a great job identifying the strongest links between the NSS and Global Trends 2040. The one that stands out to me the most is contestation. After all, the NSS makes that explicit when it says that “a competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next” (White House, 2022, p. 6). Similarly, your interpretation of adaptation is on point. The strategy’s focus on resilience, both in terms of public health and climate and in terms of tech modernization, exemplifies exactly the danger Global Trends 2040 warned of, where global challenges “repeatedly test the resilience and adaptability of communities, states, and the international system” (National Intelligence Council, 2021, p. 1). I was particularly glad you decided to include Fried’s critique. I have read his piece in the Atlantic Council, and it is fair to say that while this may be a strong vision, it does not quite grasp the tough trade-offs and administrative difficulties it would entail (Fried, 2022). The concern over commitment versus pragmatism is likely to be a recurring theme in the years to come. Thanks for sharing your thoughts.

References

- Fried, D. (2022, October 13). Biden molds the US strategic tradition to new challenges. In Atlantic Council, Experts react: The hits and misses in Biden’s new National Security Strategy. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react-the-hits-and-misses-in-bidens-new-national-security-strategy/#fried>
- National Intelligence Council. (2021). Global trends 2040: A more contested world. https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf

White House. (2022). National security strategy. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

Secondary Post #3 (by June 12, 2025)

DBF 2.2 SECONDARY POST RESPONSE

Hi Warren, I appreciated your take and how you mapped the five Global Trends themes to sections of the NSS. I agree with your point that the NSS provides “some level of assertion” for each, though I would argue that contestation and adaptation take center stage while others are more lightly touched. The NSS opens by stating, “the post-Cold War era is definitively over” and that “a competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next,” which sets the tone for contestation early on (White House, 2022, p. 6). Adaptation gets attention too, particularly in its call to “modernize the joint force” and update “rules of the road for technology, cyberspace, trade, and economics” (White House, 2022, pp. 21, 32).

On the other hand, Global Trends 2040 warns of “fragmentation within communities, states, and the international community” (National Intelligence Council, 2021, p. 2), yet the NSS mostly references that indirectly. Disinformation and social disruption are mentioned, but without much strategic detail. So while I agree all five themes are present, I think some are more framework than focus.

References

National Intelligence Council. (2021). Global trends 2040: A more contested world. https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf

White House. (2022). National security strategy. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>