

NET ASSESSMENT AND JOINTNESS

BY

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1. Net Assessment (NA) as applicable to national security can be defined as comparative analysis of military balances between competing states or even as-yet-friendly but potential competitors. It covers a long enough period, both the past and the future, to be able to identify trends in instruments of national power, endemic strengths and vulnerabilities of the competitors. But the most important fact is that NA process deals with issues well beyond current military capabilities.

2. Military capability as understood by a NA practitioner is actually a country's 'defence' capability which includes but is not limited to military strength, strategy, doctrines, operational concepts and tactics. It includes assessment of other tools like demography, social cohesion, economic strength, technology application, diplomacy, and strategic culture which aspirations together impact defence preparedness and policy. A NA practitioner, therefore, by necessity and habit looks at issues holistically and not sectionally.

Aim

3. Aim of this paper is to examine the contribution of net assessment process to the concept of jointness.

Arrangement of the Paper

4. The paper is laid out as follows:-
 - (a) Overview of NA process.
 - (b) Elements of NA process requiring wide enquiry.
 - (c) Contribution of NA process to the concept of jointness.
 - (d) Conclusion.

Overview of NA Process

5. Aspects of NA process with bearing on jointness are discussed in following paragraphs.

6. **Multidisciplinary Approach.** NA adopts a multidisciplinary approach, not only because different tools are used for understanding various issues involved but different points of view are also useful in understanding them. NA, therefore, not only gets inputs from within the defence forces and specialists from other fields but also influences their views by getting them to see things from one another's point of view.

7. **Deeper Analysis.** NA focuses on deeper analysis of strengths and weaknesses of competitors in a holistic manner by taking cognizance of aspects like state of economy and its impact on defence spending, national technical base, character of national leadership, national myths and their impact on decision making etc. Bringing together a large number of people who are knowledgeable about their own fields helps developing a culture of joint thinking.

8. **Tools Employed in NA.** NA employs tools like scenario planning exercises, strategic war gaming and cross-impact matrix analysis. These tools invariably involve testing of ideas, probable events and force application (involving all services and other levers of power). These tools help channelizing thought process of all those involved in them towards synergized application of power tools and the results likely to be achieved by doing so. Besides, symposia, seminar and structured interaction brings together people dealing with national security from various fields and help shaping their perceptions and helping them to look at issues from different perspectives thus enlarging their horizon and moving them beyond their narrow outlook.

9. **Perceptions.** Different players act and react to various stimuli based on their perceptions about own and competitors thinking, aspirations, capabilities, past behaviour, strengths and weaknesses and intentions. NA practitioners, therefore, seek knowledge of perceptions through interaction with decision makers, common people and members of defence forces. These interactions help to trace out common and powerful thought processes prevalent and also help in perception shaping to some extent.

10. **Data Collection.** The most important part of NA process is to obtain factual data. Ideally this requires obtaining first hand information on various facets of the nature and character of military competition and factors affecting this. The exercise of data collection itself, to certain degree, helps in focusing the attention of various players on to a common purpose.

11. In our own case, interaction with all branches of HQ IDS, services HQ, MoD and other government agencies and think tanks on issues of strategic security and policy encourages, albeit subtly, joint thinking thus helping the cause of jointness.

Elements of NA Process Requiring Wide Enquiry

12. Most important analytical part of the NA process is the competition analysis including the present and future state of competition and the military competition. However, before arriving at competition analysis one has to identify factors that impact the nature and state of competition, analyze trends in these factors over a period of time including their likely trajectory, discontinuities - already apparent and that are likely to occur in future, identification of wild cards that may alter the whole calculus and the critical uncertainties with potential to affect the state of competition. This brings out vulnerabilities and competitive edges that the competitors enjoy vis-à-vis each other.

13. Although, the aim of the whole exercise is to arrive at military balance between the competitors or groups in competition with each other (like NATO and Warsaw Pact at one stage) the 'net' can only be arrived at through a process of wide enquiry. Comparing the numbers of men under arms and the weapons and equipment holding is not enough. This requires information, understanding and analysis of all those factors that have an influence over the military's development and employment. For example, demographics determine availability of recruitable population, attitude towards war and peace, economic development (affecting military spending), scientific temperament of the populace

(affecting quality of soldiers) etc. Similarly, availability of energy, water and food, state of economy and trade, influence of ideology on the states, geo-political situation, decision making process, state of national morale and internal cohesion are critical issues impacting the military balance of the competitors.

14. Even while examining purely military capabilities there is a requirement to go beyond numbers. Military strategy doctrine, standards of training, morale and motivation of forces, availability of and ability to absorb new technologies, quality of leadership, war experience, geographic advantages or disadvantages and reliability of equipment are some of the factors that will have a bearing on the military capabilities of the competitors. Jointness in military strategy, aligning of operational concepts and synergized employment of all wings of defence forces enhance their overall combat potential dramatically.

15. Net Assessment takes all these factors into consideration and realizes their importance. Hence, the whole process involves searching for answers well beyond the confines of narrow service specific enquiry but a broad based and thorough enquiry.

Contribution of NA Process to the Concept of Jointness

16. Depth and width of enquiry and analysis is the basic requirement of NA process. The concept of jointness is thus epitomized by this process and a NA practitioner is by necessity a practitioner of jointness as well. It is impossible to carryout a worthwhile net assessment by confining the enquiry and analysis to just one or a few aspects. Even if the NA project is confined to a specific functional aspect like maritime balance between two competitors it will still require examination of many other factors that will impact the specific balance.

17. The process of net assessment not only changes the basic mindset of the NA practitioner but also influences others involved in the process because with each interaction the persons involved are exposed to perspectives and perceptions other than their own. Hence, a culture of taking other views into consideration spreads. The process challenges their own beliefs and subtly influences their own thought process. They learn to think how factors, capabilities, strengths and vulnerabilities in fields other than their own impact effectiveness of their own service and how national capabilities can be built up through synergy of all elements of national power.

Conclusion

18. Net Assessment involves holistic examination and analysis of factors affecting military balance between the competing powers. Whereas strategy formulation is beyond the scope of NA process it is meant to highlight a range of probable alternate futures that need to be considered by the strategy planners so that the country creates and maintains military advantage vis-à-vis its competitor(s) under all probable contingencies.

19. NA team, by virtue of necessity, has to carry out a deep enquiry about, and analysis of, all drivers, trends, uncertainties etc that have a bearing on the competition and thus on the military balance between the competitors. The scope of enquiry and analysis goes much beyond numbers of men under arms and their employment. It involves a composite thought process, creation of information base and style of strategic thinking involving all relevant drivers of competition. Synergy

and jointness fit naturally into the process and therefore, a NA team not only becomes a practitioner of jointness but also influences the thinking of all others who get involved with it while carrying out NA projects.