

Net technical assessment

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Résumé ou extrait : The Biden administration's 2022 National Security Strategy recognizes technology as a major front on which strategic competition is waged. The centrality of technology to the conduct and outcome of strategic competition motivates an analytic task: the development of methodologies for assessing the state of play of technological competition. This report proposes one such methodology for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD): a net technical assessment (NTA), which, for a given technology area, is designed to characterize the technical state of the art, measure relative national standing, and identify and assess technology applications for accomplishing strategically important military objectives. This NTA methodology is informed by the long-standing net assessment approach but tailored to assess the impact of select technologies on strategic competition. The practice of net assessment was largely developed by Andrew Marshall during his time at the RAND Corporation and the Office of Net Assessment. Marshall proposed that to correctly understand a country's strategic behavior requires abandoning traditional (rational actor-based) approaches to evaluating military power in favor of a novel approach built on the detailed empirical study of the myriad factors that affect national strategic behavior in practice. The approach presented in this report leverages Marshall's insight and proposes an assessment methodology that connects demonstrated national technical capabilities in the context of scenario-based reasoning (cognizant of the complexity of competitors' domestic bureaucracies and institutions below the national level) and draws on tools, ideas, and concepts from diverse disciplines based on their practical utility in advancing the assessment task at hand.

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