

Dynamics of National Security Strategy

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ABSTRACT

“The problems before us are not insurmountable but they are unprecedented in their complexity, gravity and urgency” (Guterres, 2022). The words of UN Secretary-General bluntly expose the magnitude of the challenges we are facing in these uncertain times, fundamentally reflected in a society that has never seen such technological marvels before but is unable to control the damage to the fragile ecological equilibrium that holds this planet home to the human race; where globalization has provided the opportunity to foster a common understanding amongst cultural diversity, yet divide and polarization thrive in narratives that circle the virtual world at daunting speeds, bringing damaging effects to the livelihoods of the real world citizens; or an international community, built over lessons that ought to be learned from countless lives lost in too many wars from the last century, yet armed conflicts continue to spread and the threshold for irreversible military action amongst great powers is reminiscent of the Cold War Era, shattering previous balancing mechanisms that were founded in mutual trust. It is in this turbulent context that Nations, as social constructs evolving with History, seek for survival and prosperity in the long term through the use of all available means. Such endeavour is commonly captured by the concept of National Security in its broadest sense: “Strategy formulation for national security has always been important because the stakes are so high and the issues so complex, but it is particularly important today” (Cancian, Schaus, & Dalton, 2017).

“The most vital reason for understanding strategy is to safeguard the security of one’s nation”, argues Gray (Gray, 2010, p. 48) noting that there is no agreement on the distinctions between foreign affairs strategy, national security strategy, and grand strategy: “The boundaries between military strategy and the levels above it are not fixed”. The diversification and increased complexity of the Instruments of National Power, as key elements that must be orchestrated in a holistic fashion to ensure the basic functioning of all sectors of a thriving society, represent a considerable challenge. This difficulty in understanding how interactions occur with multiple elements usually leads to oversimplified explanations and solutions to complex problems. National Security Strategies and related processes aren’t immune to this context and urge for more adequate approaches to cope with complexity. The challenges towards such endeavours are complex and raise a host of questions that Military Sciences must also explore and contribute with expert knowledge on the domains of both Strategy and Security and Defence studies. The question presented by Gray (2010, p. 49) of “do the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) categories of power cover all relevant variables?”, or even asking how the military interacts with other Instruments of Power in such complex environment, are some of the main drivers for this research and its problem definition.

The main methodology selected to conduct this research follows from the field of System Dynamics. It can be defined as a computer-aided approach to theory building, policy analysis, and strategic decision support emerging from an endogenous point of view, dealing with any dynamic systems characterized by interdependence, mutual interaction, information feedback, and circular causality. Conceptually, the feedback mechanism is at the heart of the System Dynamics approach which is founded on the scientific method (Richardson, 2020).

Aiming at furthering the concept of National Security and, through the modelling of the interactions of Elements of National Power, create a practical framework that enables simulation of different scenarios, the integration of performance data for evaluation purposes, and the identification of key nodes on the system’ structure, the general objective of this research is the development of a systemic model of National Security for Strategy formulation, simulation, and monitoring.

KEYWORDS

National Security, Complexity, Strategy, Elements of National Power, System Dynamics

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