

Comprehensive National Power : A Model for India*

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The book is the result of a research project undertaken by the USI and is the first one of its kind in India. Historically, national power has been considered synonymous with military power. This would explain to a great extent the superpower status of the erstwhile Soviet Union and its unexpected disintegration. Since then the perception of national power has undergone a change.

The Study has defined Comprehensive National Power (CNP) as the aggregate power (comprising of hard, soft and smart power constituents) of a state and its ability to use its national capacity in the achievement of its national objectives. It is to the credit of the Chinese who during the early 1980s coined the phrase and developed the idea of measurement and quantification of CNP.

The book starts with an overview of CNP and after a broad discussion on conceptualising CNP, Methodologies and Thought Processes goes on to analyse various determinants of CNP, with special reference to India. In the chapter dealing with Methodology of the Study, a detailed discussion has been done of the Chinese and Western studies that have been undertaken in the recent past. Here the Study also lists the possible reasons which may prevent India from achieving its true potential.

The next few chapters deal with various elements of CNP with special reference to India; namely the economic determinants, science and technology, foreign policy, the role of the military and most importantly various bottlenecks which India could face such as: issues of governance, administrative and police reforms, internal security, caste system, urbanization and so on. It is a kind of reality check for India's growth story.

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The Study has gone into great depths to analyse the role of military power in the determination of CNP. According to a Chinese study, *"military power is not only an explicit function of CNP but is also a tangible expression of the will to power."* The Study has adopted a unique method to evaluate the role of military's contribution to CNP. Known as the 'Carver Delphi Method' it involved eliciting the views of 150 middle level and senior Indian and foreign military officers alongwith other scholars on what they considered to be the determinants of military capability. The relative standings of nine countries including India with regard to military capability, based on this method, are given in a Table on Page 231 of the book. India ranks fourth, behind the USA, Russia and China.

The high point of the book is the last but one chapter on 'Proposed Model for India and Interpreting the Results of the CNP Quantitative Model' which is also on a CD enclosed with the book. Based on multiple-variable analysis the study proceeds to quantify various building blocks to determine the CNP which is a relative concept. It is dependent upon a range of matrix among a selected peer group of countries. The Study has assessed each state on 88 variables spread across six master determinants. In the final analysis, India ranks sixth in the peer group of nine states. The last chapter deals with 'India's Road Ahead to Great Power Status'. It is a kind of road map for India to achieve its rightful place in the comity of nations. The Study also establishes very clearly the intricate relationship of CNP with grand strategy and vice versa.

The book is a seminal work which would propel analysts and scholars to undertake further studies on this vital aspect of nation building. If one was to critically examine the adequacy of determinants of CNP, one may be tempted to add 'National Morale' to the list of determinants. It is an intangible and not easy to quantify or fit into an equation; yet it is a vital aspect of a nation's 'will to power'. It is a challenge for future researchers on CNP to crank this into their equations.

Having read the book from cover to cover, let me also say that right in the beginning the book takes you to a kind of 'intellectual high' and maintains you there right upto the end. The Study has also identified weaknesses and inadequacies that must be addressed, if India is to become a great power for which it has all the ingredients.