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The Language of Inform, Influence, and Persuade

Assessment Lexicon and Usage Guide for U.S. European Command Efforts

Words matter. Many of the terms used to discuss assessment in the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) mean different things to different staff sections, offices, organizations, and individuals. Sometimes, the same office or individual uses the same term to denote multiple dissimilar things. This leads to confusion, miscommunication, and, occasionally, the appearance of agreement or disagreement when the opposite is true.

The objective of this lexicon and usage guide is to promote common understanding and reliable

shared usage of terms and concepts related to assessment across intra- and interorganizational stakeholders and to ensure that discourse related to assessment is unambiguous, clear, consistent, grounded in doctrine, and shareable.

The main term in this lexicon is *assessment*, but it also covers terms and concepts related to assessment, confused with assessment, or used in discussions of assessment, including *estimate*, *evaluation*, *measures*, *indicators*, *objective*, *target*, and *theory of change*.

This lexicon was developed in consultation with personnel involved in conducting and presenting assessments, as well as those who are responsible for making decisions

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Words matter. Many of the terms used to discuss assessment in DoD and USEUCOM mean different things to different staff sections, offices, organizations, and individuals—and sometimes these definitions are contradictory.
- Common understanding and reliable shared usage are essential. This lexicon and usage guide facilitate collaboration with intra- and interorganizational stakeholders.
- Existing institutional definitions take priority. Respect DoD joint doctrine, but also consider formal definitions used by stakeholders.
- More is better. An ambiguous term can be clarified by adding qualifying terms adjacent to it.
- Consensus counts. A candidate usage may appear correct (both in its denotation and connotation), but if all stakeholders are not comfortable with that usage, it may need to be refined or replaced.

based on those assessments. This iterative process included discussions with stakeholders to identify terms that are both relevant to assessment and vulnerable to misunderstanding; a review of joint doctrine and current usage of these terms in guidance and products produced by ECJ39, the information operations staff of USEUCOM; a review of the draft lexicon and recommended usage with ECJ39 stakeholders at a May 2018 workshop; and revisions based on feedback received during and after the workshop.

Development of this document followed three guidelines:

- Respect existing institutional definitions, giving priority to DoD joint doctrine, but considering formal definitions from other stakeholders.
- More is better. An ambiguous term can be clarified by adding one or more qualifying terms adjacent to it.
- Consensus counts. The way a term is used might appear to be correct in both its denotation and connotation, but if all stakeholders are not comfortable with that usage, it may require refinement or replacement.

Assessment Lexicon: Overview of the Terms

The table at right summarizes the terms addressed in this lexicon. A full glossary of terms and formal definitions in joint doctrine and a one-page visual summary of *assessment*-related usage guidance can be found at the end of this document.

Assessment

Assessment is a quintessential example of a term that means different things to different users in different contexts, resulting in confusion. It is essential to get it right, and for this reason, *assessment* is the cornerstone of this lexicon. *Assessment* is used to denote (at least) the following six categories of activities:

1. measuring progress toward a goal, objective, or end state, including mission completion
2. measuring the performance or effectiveness of specific tasks, actions, events, or programs

3. establishing or maintaining situational awareness or analyzing a context or environment, possibly including watching for trends of interest, emerging concerns, or opportunities
4. determining the effectiveness of combat actions (e.g., combat assessment, battle damage assessment); this is a subset of category 2
5. examining the presence or extent of a specific factor of interest in a context, plan, or force (e.g., feasibility assessment, threat assessment, risk assessment, vulnerability assessment)
6. sloppily, as a synonym for *analyzing*, *characterizing*, *identifying*, *considering*, *observing*, and similar terms.

All six categories reflect valid instances of common English-language uses of *assessment* or *assess*. Categories 1–5 represent distinct types of activities, all of which could be (confusingly) labeled *assessment*. Note that all six categories can be described without using the term *assessment*. (In the list above, *assessment* appears only in the parenthetical examples, not in the category descriptions.)

The conflation—and the real challenge—comes from categories 1–3. Category 4, a subcategory of category 2, avoids any confusion by virtue of always adding qualifying language. No one ever conflates battle damage assessment with other kinds of assessment, because no one ever refers to battle damage assessment as just *assessment*. Category 5 is similarly unproblematic because the various assessments that fall into this category are always qualified or specified with an additional word. Category 6 can lead to conflation, but this is easily resolved: Stop saying *assess* when you mean something else!

Assessment in Doctrine

The recommended usage for *assessment* draws on how the term is used in joint doctrine.

Joint Publication 2-01.3

JP 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment*, uses *analyze*, *assess*, and *evaluate* interchangeably—most of the time. For example, Section C, Chapter VI, notes, “Assessment is a continuous process that measures the overall effectiveness of employing joint force capabilities

Summary of Lexicon Terms, Definitions, and Recommended Usage

Term	Definition and Recommended Usage
Progress assessment	Measures progress toward one or more objectives. May include multiple operations, activities, or investments (OAls), provided they all contribute to achieving the objective(s).
Performance assessment	Subordinate to progress assessment and focused on one program or OAI. Includes measures of performance (MOPs) and captures the extent of implementation or execution of a program or OAI.
Effectiveness assessment	Subordinate to progress assessment and focused on one program or OAI. Measures the contribution of an individual program or OAI toward meeting an objective. Includes measures of effectiveness (MOEs) and measures of effectiveness indicators (MOEIs).
Estimate	Does not require an objective, only an area, audience, medium, or activity of interest. Establishes or maintains situational awareness of a context, environment, or audience; possibly includes watching for trends, emerging concerns, opportunities, or changes related to a specific event. Because of the variety in estimates, the term should always be preceded by at least one qualifying/specifying term.
Evaluation	Adheres to common English usage to denote comparison of alternatives or comparison against an absolute standard. Not an adequate substitute descriptor for any form of assessment.
MOP	Criterion for friendly action that is tied to measuring task accomplishment. Continue current usage. Part of performance assessment.
MOE	Criterion for system state, with change indicated by comparing multiple observations over time. Part of effectiveness assessment and related to progress assessment.
Indicator	General measurement language. A specific piece of information that infers the condition, state, or existence of something and provides a reliable means to ascertain performance or effectiveness.
MOEI	A unit, location, or event observed or measured that can be used to assess an MOE. Subordinate to MOE. Potentially useful for providing multiple proxy measures for an MOE. Also useful in more clearly specifying an unchangeable but deficient MOE.
Objective	The clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which every operation is directed. There is a hierarchy of objectives that needs to be more fully developed. Always specify which objectives are being considered as part of progress assessment and effectiveness assessment. All objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).
Target	Target audience should be used to describe any individuals or groups selected for influence. They may be acknowledged as targets when they perform a function for the adversary. When neither of these conditions apply, use relevant actor.
Theory of change	The clear, logical connections between an OAI and desired outcome, including intermediate steps between the current situation and desired outcome. Can also be described as the logic of the effort. Connects MOPs, MOEs, and objectives.

NOTE: Definitions and usage guidance are drawn from doctrinal documents.

during military operations” (p. VI-16). This is the only section in which the use of *assessment* is consistent with the definition in JP 3-0. JP 2-01.3 contributes to and perpetuates the confusion and conflation that prompted the development of this lexicon.

Joint Publication 3-0

JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, emphasizes “assessment of progress” and is the source of the definition of assessment in the *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (JP 1-02). Although JP 3-0 is mostly consistent, with *assessment* focused

on progress or effectiveness, it is not free from conflation. For example, JP 3-0 notes that commander’s critical information requirements “help the [joint force commander] and staff assess the [operating environment]” (p. II-7). It is likely not a coincidence that this category 3–type use of *assess* is related to intelligence, a field in which the term appears to be used much more loosely. Save for a few other slips (for example, *assess* is used in connection to risk, commander’s critical information requirements, staff estimates, and capabilities and intentions as part of operations security), JP 3-0 is mostly consistent

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in treating assessment as part of measuring effectiveness, progress, or performance, consistent with categories 1 and 2.

Joint Publication 5-0

JP 5-0, *Joint Planning*, includes considerable discussion of assessment, with an entire chapter on *operation assessment*. Here, operation assessment is a blend of measuring progress toward campaign objectives or mission accomplishment and measuring risks and opportunities in the environment—with both these efforts focused on supporting decisionmaking. Operation assessment integrates information to enhance understanding of the operating environment, which helps commanders plan more-effective operations.

JP 5-0 describes several other kinds of assessment (for example, assessing plans, risk, and campaigns). It also includes the potentially confusing phrase *campaign plan assessment*, which is described as *campaign assessment*, not *plan assessment*. There is also *plan assessment*, in which commanders continually review and evaluate a plan and select one of four actions—refine, adapt, terminate, or execute—and then proceed accordingly.

Joint Publication 3-13

JP 3-13, *Information Operations*, has a whole chapter on information operations (IO) assessment, including this description:

Assessment of IO is a key component of the commander's decision cycle, helping to determine the results of tactical actions in the context of overall mission objectives and providing potential recommendations for refinement of future plans. Assessments also provide opportunities to identify [information-related capability] shortfalls, changes in parameters and/or conditions in the information

environment, which may cause unintended effects in the employment of [information-related capabilities], and resource issues that may be impeding joint IO effectiveness. (p. xiv)

JP 3-13 acknowledges that the term *assessment* gets used in numerous different ways, but it is clear about the intended usage. However, unlike the other joint publications mentioned here, JP 3-13 remains consistent in its usage, never slipping into casual use of assessment or using assessment where *estimate* is called for:

The term “assessment” has been used to describe everything from analysis (e.g., assessment of the enemy) to an estimate of the situation (pre-engagement assessment of blue and red forces). Within the context of this chapter, assessment is the determination of the progress toward achieving commander's objectives or attaining an end state, and focuses on the tactical and operational levels of assessment that assist and inform the [joint force commander's] decision making. Assessment considerations should be thoroughly integrated into IO planning. (p. VI-1)

Recommended Usage

- Avoid casual or colloquial use of assessment or assess; instead, use *analyze*, *characterize*, *identify*, *consider*, *observe*, *note*, or a similar term.
- Stop describing category 3 activities (situational awareness, running estimates of a context) as *assessments*. They should be referred to as the *production of estimates*.
- Never use *assessment* by itself; always include one or more qualifying or specifying terms, ideally prior to *assessment*.

For categories 1–3, adopt the following usage:

1. *Progress assessment*. Requires at least one objective (e.g., goal, end state, or mission objective) and measures progress toward that objective. May include multiple OAIs, provided they all contribute to achieving the objective(s). Examples include *campaign assessment* and *operation assessment* (JP 5-0). Note that a campaign assessment might aggregate multiple operations assessments, but both are types of progress assessments.
2. *Performance assessment* or *effectiveness assessment*. Subordinate to progress assessment and focused on one program or OAI. *Performance assessment* includes MOPs and captures the extent of implementation or execution of a program or OAI. *Effectiveness assessment* measures the contribution of an individual program or OAI to meeting an objective. Includes MOEs and MOEIs.
3. *Estimate*. Often incorrectly referred to as an *assessment*. Does not require an objective, only an area, audience, media, or activity of interest. Establishes or maintains situational awareness of a context, environment, or audience; possibly includes watching for trends, emerging concerns, opportunities, or changes related to a specific event. Many different types of estimates are possible, so the term should always include qualifying language. Examples include *running estimate of the information environment relevant to Ukraine*, *social media estimate for Catalonia*, *media use estimate*, *estimate of sentiment related to NATO*.

When it comes to *assessment* (by itself), confusion among ECJ39 stakeholders can be alleviated by using *progress assessment*, *performance assessment*, *effectiveness assessment*, or *estimate*, as appropriate.

Estimate

As noted, some significant fraction of what are casually referred to as *assessments* in intelligence doctrine and practice should properly be called *estimates*.

A review of definitions and usage in joint doctrine concurs.

Recommended Usage

- Initial explorations of a situation or context, or ongoing monitoring of a situation or context, should *not* be called *assessment* and should, for consistency, be referred to as some kind of *estimate*. This is consistent with the recommended use of assessment for category 3 activities.
- Many different kinds of estimates are possible. While calling them *estimates* clearly and unambiguously separates them from assessments, it leaves open the possibility of conflation among different estimates. Estimates should be described with additional qualifiers that clarify the information they encompass. Qualifiers might include the scope of the estimate (a region, a country, a language), the subject or topic of the estimate (sentiment, media use patterns, response to a specific action), and the data source or method used to create the estimate (social media, traditional media). Specific examples: *impact estimate for event X* (where *event X* is an adversary-initiated event, an exogenous event, or a surprise friendly-force event), *social media estimate of Russian speakers in the Polish province of Lublin*, and *estimate of social media use related to the 2018 German elections*.

As a general rule, if the activity or undertaking being observed or measured does not have an *objective*, then the observation is not an *assessment* but is instead an *estimate*.

Evaluation

One term that could help reduce confusion and conflation is *evaluation*. The academic discipline focused on measuring the effectiveness or progress of an effort is called *program evaluation*, and professionals in this discipline are called *evaluators*. Thus, *evaluation* might serve to denote one of the types of activities we need to label.

Evaluation in Doctrine

In joint doctrine, *evaluate* and *evaluation* are used casually and with their common-sense English denotation. *Evaluation* is used in doctrine far less frequently than *assessment*. *Evaluation* is formally defined in doctrine and appears in JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, where it is described as “appraisal of an item of information in terms of credibility, reliability, pertinence, and accuracy.” The use of *evaluation* in joint doctrine is clearly not confined to this narrow definition.

In JP 5-0, *plan assessment* is described as the continual review and evaluation of the plan. Courses of action are also *evaluated* or *compared* in JP 5-0. There is a specific heading about developing evaluation criteria for courses of action. Numerous other factors are evaluated, according to the process described in JP 5-0, but evaluation is rarely a headline activity; that is, it pretty much appears only in descriptions of the otherwise named activities.

In addition to evaluating information as part of the intelligence process and evaluating courses of action as part of the planning process, joint doctrine and practice include a number of different forms of technical evaluation, where proposals, tools, or alternative solutions are evaluated.

Recommended Usage

- *Evaluation* remains a perfectly fine common English-language term for comparing alternatives or comparing one item/action/alternative against an absolute standard. However, descriptions of this term vary within and across doctrine, and the descriptions do not sufficiently address the characteristics of any assessment category.
- *Evaluation* is not an adequate or exclusive substitute for any of the six different categories of use of *assessment* described here.

Measures and Indicators

Discussions of assessment as a means to measure progress or effectiveness in joint doctrine always specify MOPs and MOEs.

Measures and Indicators in Doctrine

JP 5-0 contributes the joint lexicon entries for both: An *MOP* is “an indicator used to measure a friendly action that is tied to measuring task accomplishment,” and an *MOE* is “an indicator used to measure a current system state, with change indicated by comparing multiple observations over time” (p. GL-12).

Indicator has multiple definitions in the joint lexicon, including an intelligence usage (denoting a piece of information that reflects the intention or capability of an adversary to adopt or reject a course of action), an operations security usage, and an assessment-related definition (from JP 5-0): “a specific piece of information that infers the condition, state, or existence of something, and provides a reliable means to ascertain performance or effectiveness” (p. GL-10).

Although MOPs and MOEs are defined as “indicators,” these terms are most frequently used in practice to describe criteria or standards rather than actual measurements, indicators, or observations. Several stakeholders (and a reviewer) noted to us that, in planning, MOPs and MOEs are usually used to denote *what* to measure rather than *how* to measure or the actual measurements themselves.

JP 3-13 elaborates the role of MOPs and MOEs in IO assessment:

Measures of performance (MOPs) and measures of effectiveness (MOEs) help accomplish the assessment process by qualifying or quantifying the intangible attributes of the information environment. The MOP for any one action should be whether or not the [target audience] was exposed to the IO action or activity. MOEs should be observable, to aid with collection; quantifiable, to increase objectivity; precise, to ensure accuracy; and correlated with the progress of the operation, to attain timeliness. Indicators are crucial because they aid the joint IO planner in informing MOEs and should be identifiable across the center of gravity critical factors. (p. xv)

A related term is *measure of effectiveness indicator* (MOEI). *MOEI* is not defined in JP 1-02, but it does appear in that document in the list of shortened words, abbreviations, and other joint publications. JP 3-13 makes the most extensive use of *MOEI* and

defines it as follows: “An MOEI is a unit, location, or event observed or measured, that can be used to assess an MOE” (p. IV-10).

This is slightly convoluted, because an MOE is defined as an indicator, so an MOEI is then an indicator for an indicator. But if we consider the MOE to be the criterion or standard, then an MOEI is much closer to an actual measurement.

Discussions with stakeholders revealed that *MOEI* as a term has several possible uses. First, as noted, it allows a distinction between the summary effect desired (the MOE) and actual measurements (MOEIs). Second, it allows the generation of multiple measures or observations that can be used to approximate, represent, or contribute to a summary of MOE accomplishment, something that is particularly useful when a direct measure of the desired effect is not available. Third, it supports effective measurement. Even when an MOE specified at a higher echelon has deficiencies (such as being poorly specified or not actually measurable), subordinate staffs can identify and specify MOEIs that support the MOE without needing to change the original MOE.

Recommended Usage

- Although *MOP* and *MOE* get used to denote both standards and criteria in planning and actual measures against those criteria in execution, this dual use does not appear to cause any conflation and therefore appears to be acceptable.
- *Indicator* should be used exclusively to denote things that are actually measurable or observable.
- Although *MOEI* appears to be redundant with *MOE*, the current usage is acceptable. It would be better if MOEs were always actually measurable, but the concept of MOEIs as subordinate to and supporting an MOE, and as multiple measures from which to triangulate a difficult to observe MOE, is clear.

Objectives

If an important aspect of assessment in categories 1 and 2 is measuring progress toward objectives, then

objective becomes another term that is potentially relevant to this discussion.

Objectives in Doctrine

JP 5-0 provides the definition of *objective* for the joint lexicon: “The clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which every operation is directed.” Missing from JP 1-02 is the elaboration in JP 5-0:

These are short- to mid-range goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Objectives are used as markers, during the execution and assessment of the strategy and aid in developing decision points. [Combatant commanders] should identify intermediate objectives as steps to aid in assessing progress toward the longer-range objectives established by the [guidance for the employment of the force] or [joint strategic campaign plan]. As intermediate objectives are achieved, commanders and their staffs reassess their vision of the end state, their progress toward the longer-range objectives, and the need to change or alter the objectives or methods. (p. I-10)

This elaboration is noteworthy for two reasons. First, JP 5-0 explicitly calls for objectives to be SMART. Second, it codifies a hierarchy of objectives, from end state to longer-range objectives (such as those from the global force management implementation guidance or joint strategic campaign plan) and intermediate objectives. *Intermediate objective* is not defined in the glossary or listed in JP 1-02 but is described in JP 5-0 as follows:

At the operational level, [combatant commanders] identify, prioritize, and sequence intermediate objectives that support the achievement of the national-level objectives. Intermediate objectives serve as waypoints against which the [combatant command] can measure success in attaining [guidance for the employment of the force]-directed and national strategic objectives, and represent multiple actions that occur between initiation of a [combatant command’s] campaign and the ultimate achievement of campaign objectives. Intermediate objectives should be discrete, identifiable, measurable, and achievable. (p. I-8)

Assessment would be easier if all objectives (end states, longer-range objectives, intermediate objectives) were always SMART. When objectives at any level are not SMART, part of the assessment process will need to include either rearticulation of these objectives so that they are SMART or SMART specification of nested supporting or subordinate objectives. *Supporting objective* or *subordinate objective* is not defined in the joint lexicon, and so these (or some similar terms) should be free for use.

Related to SMART, JP 5-0 recognizes a link between objectives and assessment:

As the staff develops the desired effects, objectives, and end states during planning, they should concurrently identify the specific pieces of information needed to infer changes in the [operating environment] supporting them. These pieces of information are commonly referred to as indicators. Indicators should be *relevant, observable or collectable, responsive, and resourced*. (p. xxviii; emphasis in original)

So, objectives should be SMART, and indicators that are relevant, observable or collectable, responsive, and resourced should be identified and accompany effects, objectives, and end states.

Some plans, orders, or other documents offer *intermediate military objectives*. This is not a term acknowledged in the joint lexicon. In USEUCOM usage, an intermediate military objective is a form of intermediate objective.

JP 3-13.2, *Military Information Support Operations (MISO)*, defines *MISO objective* (formerly *psychological objective*) as “a general statement of measurable response that reflects the desired behavioral change of foreign [target audiences]” (p. IV-1). JP 3-13.2 also mentions *supporting MISO objectives* (formerly *supporting psychological objectives*), which “are specific observable and measurable behavioral responses desired from the [target audience] to accomplish a given MISO objective” (p. IV-2).

Recommended Usage

- Objectives should nest and should be described using the hierarchy in JP 5-0: *national-level objectives* and *intermediate objectives*. These terms from doctrine should

be supported by additional nested layers as needed. Recommended usage would be *supporting objectives* or *subordinate objectives*, but additional layers may be necessary. USEUCOM uses layers, all of which should be specified as part a clear hierarchy.

- Additional qualifiers can help stakeholders better understand types of objectives. The following uses are all fine: *national military objectives, strategic objectives, operational objectives, campaign objectives*, and similar terms.
- The language in JP 5-0 should be referenced, where possible, to encourage those who set objectives (or their staffs) to ensure that objectives at any level satisfy SMART criteria.

Target

Can the subjects of DoD efforts to inform, influence, and persuade be appropriately referred to as *targets*? What about the potential subjects of influence—groups and individuals in the operating environment who have not yet been selected for influence? If subjects of influence are *targets*, should they be selected, prioritized, and engaged under the auspices of the *joint targeting process*?

Target in Doctrine

JP 3-60, *Joint Targeting*, unsurprisingly contains the most extensive use of *target* and *targeting* in joint doctrine and is the source of these definitions in the joint lexicon. JP 3-60 and the targeting process it describes clearly come from a tradition of kinetic fires and physical destruction. Though kinetic fires remain the focus, JP 3-60 recognizes a broader scope of targets and subsequent actions that can be taken. It explicitly acknowledges a wide range of effects that can be wrought on targets, and it calls out nonlethal fires and other forms of engagement or actions to which targets might be subjected.

JP 3-60 also notes, “Targets should be logically and causally tied to objectives at all levels—strategic, operational, and tactical,” which is consistent with how the term *objectives* is used in this lexicon and hints at the possibility of a wider aperture for *targets*

(p. I-2). The effects described in JP 3-60 also leave the door open for influence efforts:

From the targeting perspective, an effect is a change in the physical or behavioral state of a target system, a target system component, a target, or a target element that results from an action, a set of actions, or another effect. A desired effect can be thought of as a condition that can support achieving an associated objective, while an undesired effect is a condition that can inhibit progress toward an objective. (p. II-33)

The problem with JP 3-60's treatment of targets is that they are exclusively confined to a relationship with an adversary. The JP 3-60 (and the official joint definition) of *target* is "an entity (person, place, or thing) considered for possible engagement or action to alter or neutralize the function it performs *for the adversary*" (p. I-1; emphasis added). The discussion of the characteristics of targets (physical, functional, cognitive, environmental, temporal), the view of targets as part of a system, and the required relationship between targets and objectives are all consistent with that idea that *target* includes *targets of influence*, except that *target* is formally constrained to something that performs a function for an adversary, while *target of influence* needs to be broader.¹

Of course, to some stakeholders, the exclusive relationship to an adversary is preferred. Indeed, the optics related to discussions of "targeting" noncombatants or nonadversaries could be poor unless it was made perfectly clear that they were targets only for influence or persuasion purposes.

Note that the targeting cycle described in JP 3-60 contains an assessment step, and the use of assessment in JP 3-60 is consistent with the use proposed in this lexicon in that it encompasses *combat assessment* (category 4) as a subset of *effectiveness assessment* (category 2). Also note that while the six-step targeting cycle is clearly designed and oriented for fires, its structure could support other kinds of engagement or actions, including influence efforts.² As practiced, the targeting cycle is often too structured and too rapid to comfortably accommodate influence timelines. JP 3-60 explicitly caveats the targeting cycle by

noting, "The process is not time-constrained nor rigidly sequential."

JP 3-13.2 describes *target audiences* as "individuals or groups selected for influence, and may include enemy, adversary, friendly, and neutral groups or populations" (p. I-2). Because of the constraint explicit in JP 3-60, *target audiences* are *targets* only when they perform a function for an adversary.

Though it is not formally defined in the joint lexicon, JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, uses the term *relevant actor* as the subject of the information joint function. *Relevant actor* is broader than either *target* or *target audience*.

Recommended Usage

- *Target audience* should be used to describe individuals or groups selected for influence, whether these individuals or groups are adversaries, friends, or neutrals. These entities can be acknowledged as *targets* when they perform a function for the adversary, but they should still be described as *target audiences* in reference to MISO or IO activities.
- Where possible, *influence targets* and *target audiences* should be considered alongside and integrated into the targeting process. When neither *target* nor *target audience* applies, use *relevant actor*.

Theory of Change/Logic of the Effort

In our work on the assessment of progress and performance, we have repeatedly noted the criticality of a clear theory of change or logic of the effort specifying the sequence of events or assumptions that connect the actions to be undertaken with the effects desired (Paul et al., 2015). These two terms are synonyms (some find *logic of the effort* more palatable), and there is no confusion or conflation associated with them. Another term and structure for a theory of change is *logic model*. These terms are included here to point out that they have a foundation in doctrine and not just in academic evaluation research.

Theory of Change/Logic of the Effort in Doctrine

Although JP 5-0 does not explicitly use either term, it uses the phrase *expected change* in making a strong statement of assessment (referring to progress assessment or effectiveness assessment) and describing the importance of links between elements in very much the same way an evaluation researcher would describe the logical links in a theory of change:

Ensuring effects, objectives, and end states are linked to tasks through carefully selected MOPs and MOEs is essential to the analytical rigor of an assessment framework. Establishing strong, cogent links between tasks and effects, objectives, and end states through MOPs and MOEs facilitates the transparency and clarity of the assessment approach. Additionally, links between tasks and effects, objectives, and end states assist in mapping the plan's strategy to actual activities and conditions in the [operating environment] and subsequently to desired effects, objectives, and end states. (p. VI-29)

JP 3-13 also uses the term *expected change* to address the concept of theory of change or logic of the effort in its discussion of assessment. Doctrine writers made the case that *theory of change* was not doctrinal language; therefore, the concepts within *theory of change* are doctrinally addressed as *expected changes*. JP 3-13 does explicitly reference *theory of change* in its discussion of assessment:

Understanding the interrelationships of the tasks and objectives, and the desired cause and effect, can be challenging for the planner. Mapping the expected change (a theory of change) provides the clear, logical connections between activities and desired outcomes by defining intermediate steps between current situation and desired outcome and establishing points of measurement. It should include clearly stated assumptions that can be challenged for correctness as activities are executed. The ability to challenge assumptions in light of executed activities allows the joint information operations planner to identify flawed connections between activity and outcome, incorrect assumptions, or the presence of spoilers. (p. VI-5)

Glossary of Related Terms

Most of the following definitions are excerpted from JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, with cited documents referring to the source of the definition. A full list of these documents can be found in the references section.

assessment

As listed in JP 1-02, "1. A continuous process that measures the overall effectiveness of employing joint force capabilities during military operations. 2. Determination of the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating a condition, or achieving an objective. 3. Analysis of the security, effectiveness, and potential of an existing or planned intelligence activity. 4. Judgment of the motives, qualifications, and characteristics of present or prospective employees or 'agents.'" (JP 3-0)

attack assessment

"An evaluation of information to determine the potential or actual nature and objectives of an attack for the purpose of providing information for timely decisions. See also damage estimation." (JP 3-14)

battle damage assessment

"The estimate of damage composed of physical and functional damage assessment, as well as target system assessment, resulting from the application of lethal or nonlethal military force. . . . See also combat assessment." (JP 3-0)

combat assessment

"The determination of the overall effectiveness of force employment during military operations. Combat assessment is composed of three major components: (a) battle damage assessment; (b) munitions effectiveness assessment; and (c) reattack recommendation. . . . See also battle damage assessment; munitions effectiveness assessment; reattack recommendation." (JP 3-60)

commander's estimate

"The commander's initial assessment in which options are provided in a concise statement that defines who, what, when, where, why, and how the course of action will be implemented." (JP 5-0)

criticality assessment

“An assessment that identifies key assets and infrastructure that support Department of Defense missions, units, or activities and are deemed mission critical by military commanders or civilian agency managers.” (JP 3-07.2)

damage assessment

“1. The determination of the effect of attacks on targets. 2. A determination of the effect of a compromise of classified information on national security.” (JP 3-60)

deception target

“The adversary decision maker with the authority to make the decision that will achieve the deception objective.” (JP 3-13.4)

deception objective

“The desired result of a deception operation expressed in terms of what the adversary is to do or not to do at the critical time and/or location.” (JP 3-13.4)

effect

“1. The physical or behavioral state of a system that results from an action, a set of actions, or another effect. 2. The result, outcome, or consequence of an action. 3. A change to a condition, behavior, or degree of freedom.” (JP 3-0)

estimate

“1. An analysis of a foreign situation, development, or trend that identifies its major elements, interprets the significance, and appraises the future possibilities and the prospective results of the various actions that might be taken. 2. An appraisal of the capabilities, vulnerabilities, and potential courses of action of a foreign nation or combination of nations in consequence of a specific national plan, policy, decision, or contemplated course of action. 3. An analysis of an actual or contemplated clandestine operation in relation to the situation in which it is or would be conducted to identify and appraise such factors as available as well as needed assets and potential obstacles, accomplishments, and consequences. See also intelligence estimate.” (JP 5-0)

evaluation

In intelligence usage, “appraisal of an item of information in terms of credibility, reliability, pertinence, and accuracy.” (JP 2-01)

evaluation and feedback

In intelligence contexts, “continuous assessment of intelligence operations throughout the intelligence process to ensure that the commander’s intelligence requirements are being met.” (JP 2-01)

feasibility assessment

A “basic target analysis that provides an initial determination of the viability of a proposed target for special operations forces employment.” (JP 3-05)

intelligence estimate

“The appraisal, expressed in writing or orally, of available intelligence relating to a specific situation or condition with a view to determining the courses of action open to the enemy or adversary and the order of probability of their adoption.” (JP 2-0)

joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment

“The analytical process used by joint intelligence organizations to produce intelligence estimates and other intelligence products in support of the joint force commander’s decision-making process.” (JP 2-01.3)

operation assessment

“1. A continuous process that measures the overall effectiveness of employing capabilities during military operations in achieving stated objectives. 2. Determination of the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating a condition, or achieving an objective.” (JP 5-0)

public affairs assessment

“An analysis of the news media and public environments to evaluate the degree of understanding about strategic and operational objectives and military activities and to identify levels of public support. See also assessment; public affairs.” (JP 3-61)

risk assessment

“The identification and assessment of hazards (first two steps of risk management process).” (JP 3-07.2)

staff estimate

“A continual evaluation of how factors in a staff section’s functional area support and impact the planning and execution of the mission.” (JP 5-0)

target

“1. An entity or object that performs a function for the adversary considered for possible engagement or other action. 2. In intelligence usage, a country, area, installation, agency, or person against which intelligence operations are directed. 3. An area designated and numbered for future firing. 4. In gunfire support usage, an impact burst that hits the target. See also objective area.” (JP 3-60)

target audience

“An individual or group selected for influence.” (JP 3-13)

target development

“The systematic examination of potential target systems—and their components, individual targets, and even elements of targets—to determine the necessary type and duration of the action that must be exerted on each target to create an effect that is consistent with the commander’s specific objectives.” (JP 3-60)

targeting

“The process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them, considering operational requirements and capabilities. See also joint targeting coordination board; target.” (JP 3-0)

technical evaluation

“The study and investigations by a developing agency to determine the technical suitability of material, equipment, or a system for use in the Services.” (JP 3-15.1)

threat assessment

“In antiterrorism, examining the capabilities, intentions, and activities, past and present, of terrorist

organizations as well as the security environment within which friendly forces operate to determine the level of threat.” (JP 3-07.2)

vulnerability assessment

“A Department of Defense, command, or unit-level evaluation (assessment) to determine the vulnerability of an installation, unit, exercise, port, ship, residence, facility, or other site to a terrorist attack.” (JP 3-07.2)

[See the following page for a concise, visual summary of the usage guidance discussed in this document.](#)

Assessment Lexicon: Guidance on Using the Term

The imprecise use of assessment leads to confusion, which can have consequences for campaigns and operations. The meanings in green are appropriate because their real-world use includes qualifying terms that lend specificity and prevent misunderstanding.

Avoid casual or colloquial uses

Instead of *assessment* or *assess*, use *analyze*, *characterize*, *identify*, *consider*, *observe*, *note*, etc.

Stop describing activities in category 3 (situational awareness, running estimates of context) as **assessment**

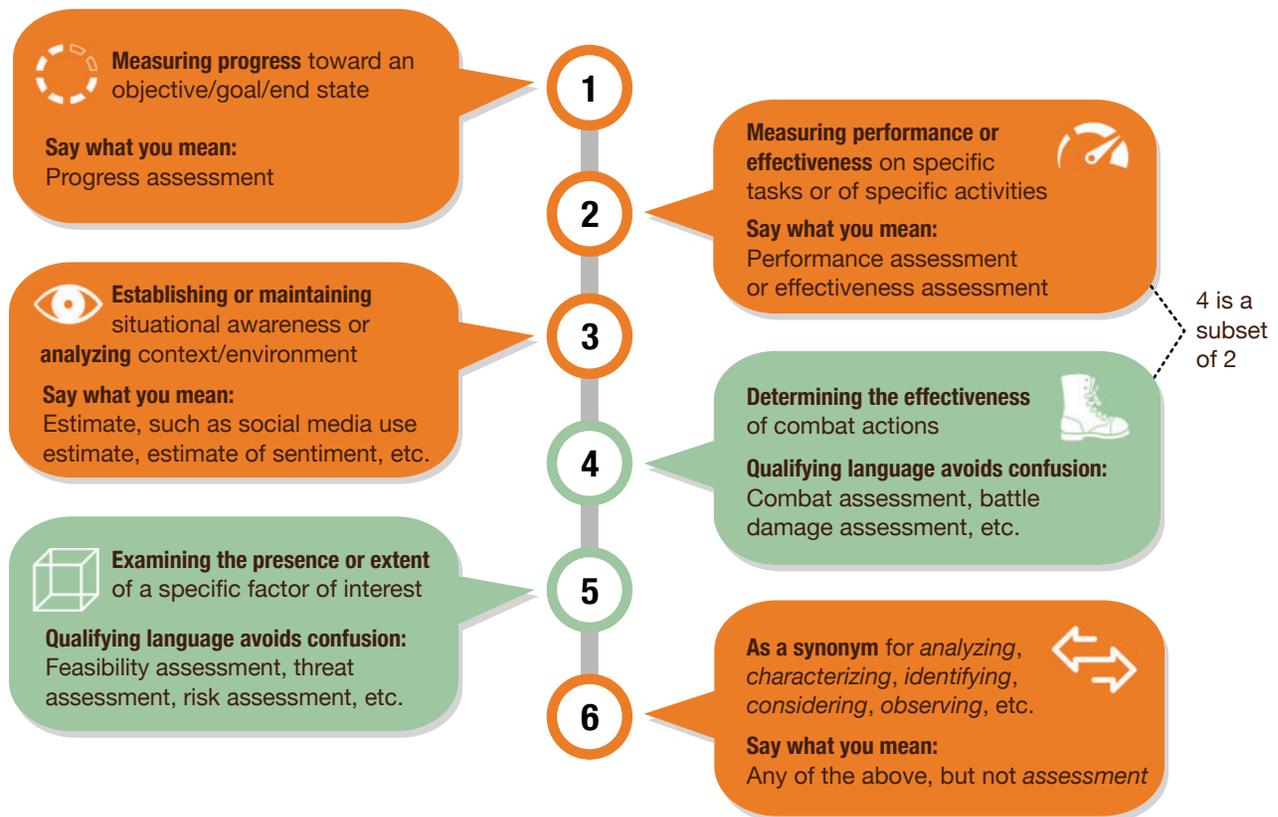
Refer to these activities as the *production of estimates*.

Never use **assessment** by itself

Always include one or more qualifying or specifying terms, ideally prior to *assessment*.

Recommended Usage

- *Progress assessment*: Requires at least one objective (e.g., goals, end states, mission objectives) and measures progress toward that objective. May include multiple operations, activities, or investments (OAI). Note that a campaign assessment might aggregate multiple operations assessments, but both are a type of progress assessment. (Category 1)
- *Performance assessment* or *effectiveness assessment*: Subordinate to progress assessment. *Performance assessment* includes MOPs and captures the extent of implementation or execution of a program or OAI. *Effectiveness assessment* measures the contribution of an individual program or OAI toward meeting an objective. Includes MOEs and MOEIs. (Category 2)
- *Estimate*: Does not require an objective. Provides situational awareness about a context, environment, or audience. Different types of estimates are possible; always include qualifying terms. (Category 3)



Notes

¹Note that something that “performs a function for the adversary” is not synonymous with “adversary.” Nonadversary entities or elements can still be part of or contribute to an adversary system and thus perform a function for that adversary.

²The six steps of the targeting cycle described in JP 3-60 are (1) end-state and commander’s objectives, (2) target development and prioritization, (3) capabilities analysis, (4) commander’s decision and force assignment, (5) mission planning and force execution, and (6) assessment.

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About This Report

Words matter. Many of the terms used to discuss assessment in the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. European Command mean different things to different staff sections, offices, organizations, and individuals. This leads to confusion, miscommunication, and even the appearance of agreement or disagreement when the opposite is true.

RAND researchers developed this lexicon and usage guidance to help combat this problem. Promoting a common language for talking about assessment will help ensure a shared understanding, consistent meaning, and improved communication among intra- and interorganizational stakeholders—something that is essential to a successful assessment effort.

This lexicon and usage guide for assessment draws on discussions with stakeholders to identify relevant terms that are commonly misunderstood, a review of joint doctrine and current usage, and review sessions with stakeholders to gain buy-in from potential users in U.S. European Command. The content was revised based on this feedback.

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