OBJECTIVES AND EFFECTS

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Centuries of traditional surface warfare have conditioned leaders of world powers to raise armies and navies, the primary attributes of which are mobility, armor, firepower, depth, and sustained presence in foreign lands. These attributes help to withstand force-on-force engagements until strategic breakthrough can be attained. Military force is one instrument of national power. Bypassing surface forces or simultaneously attacking other instruments of national power and centers of gravity (COGs) may result in a change of an adversary's ability or will to fight.

Effects-Based Approach

"Effects-based" describes the operations that are planned, executed, assessed and adapted to influence or change systems or capabilities in order to achieve desired outcomes. Effective operations should be part of a coherent plan that logically ties all actions to the achievement of the desired end state.

NOTE: For a full discussion of the effects-based approach see AFDP 3-0, *Operations and Planning*.

Strategic Objectives

Ends, not means, drive the strategic attack (SA) effort. Successful SA requires clear and attainable objectives. Objectives and desired end states should be clearly understood by planners and commanders orchestrating the SA effort and should be tied to the SAs themselves by a clear, logical mechanism of cause and effect. SA operations are designed to produce political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, cyberspace, and information effects that contribute directly to achieving the strategic objectives of the joint force commander (JFC) and higher authorities. The senior commander and national leaders should also weigh SA operations against potential unintended effects, since attacking certain COGs could have undesired impacts on populations and neighboring countries. Strategic objectives, like those at all levels, should be measurable. Commanders and national leaders should know when those objectives are achieved.

Strategic Effects

SA seeks to achieve the greatest effect for the least cost in lives and resources by systematically applying force to COGs within the pertinent systems. Systematic application of force should not be confused with sequential application, but instead refers to a systematic approach to planning and executing attacks to achieve desired effects. System change that drives enemy compliance is the goal of SA. This system change will most effectively be achieved by applying force through parallel operations where the targeted systems are struck in a compressed timeframe. This type of attack has the highest probability of pushing a system beyond its ability to react or adapt. Attempting to change the system through attacks on its periphery will not be as effective as overwhelming system-wide parallel attack.

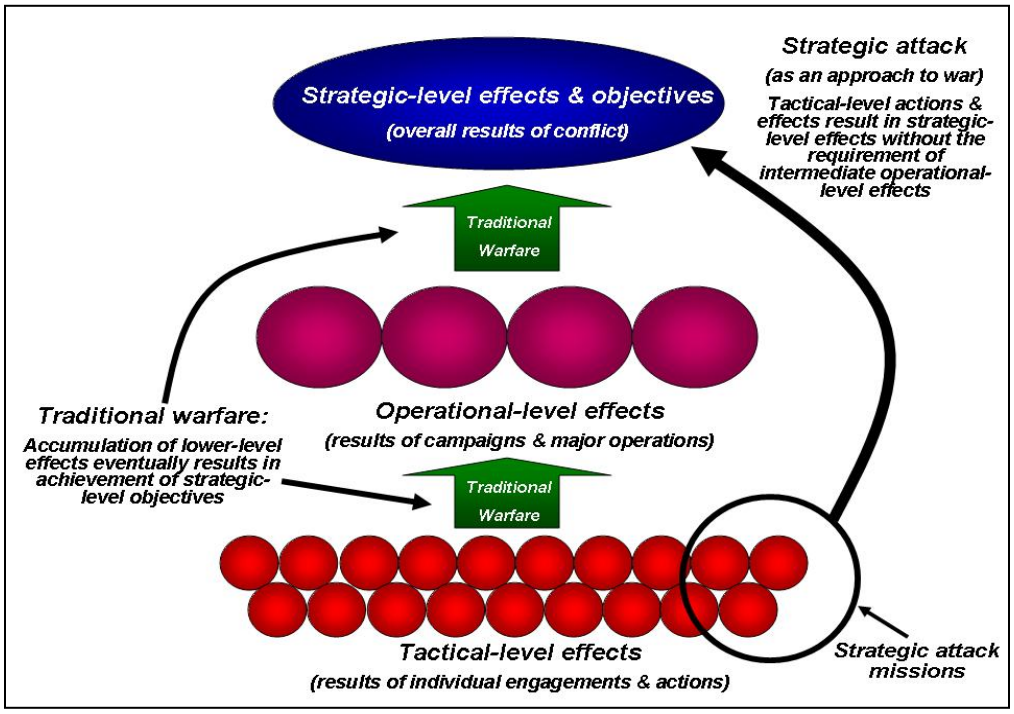
SA achieves objectives through indirect effects. SA, even more than other forms of attack, is concerned with higher-level indirect effects. Direct effects are the results of actions with no intervening causal mechanism between act and outcome. Direct effects trigger additional outcomes—intermediate effects or mechanisms that produce higher-order outcomes or results. From the commander, Air Force forces' (COMAFFOR's) perspective, individual missions or sorties are actions that cause higher-order direct effects, which in turn cause indirect effects. An example might be the action of an aircraft dropping weapons, resulting in the direct effect of destroying a bridge span. This in turn leads to the indirect effects of impeding movement of enemy forces and perhaps, in terms of SA, by severing fiber-optic cables running under the bridge span, forcing the adversary to use alternate forms of communication. It may seem that indirect effects will take longer to be realized, but in fact the end results will often occur sooner than if the operation begins at the periphery and moves to the heart.

The intended and desired indirect effects of SA may, however, coincide with unintended and undesired effects if there are gaps in our understanding of the operational environment. Destruction of a bridge span, for example, could also result in the unintended disruption of electrical power and telephone communications to a nearby community if we were unaware that these utilities were attached to the bridge. This could cause hardship in that community and erode popular support that might have existed prior to the event. Commanders and their staffs must appreciate that unpredictable third-party actions, unintended consequences of friendly operations, subordinate initiative and creativity, and the fog and friction of conflict will contribute to an uncertain operational environment (Joint Publication [JP] 5-0, *Joint Planning*).

SA can generate all types of effects, including direct, indirect, physical, behavioral, or psychological, and may occur sequentially or in parallel, cascading or cumulative. The effects generally will occur as a result of how operations are conducted—usually parallel operations will result in parallel effects which put the most stress on a system and are most likely to result in permanent system change. Sequential operations generally yield sequential effects. Also, the type of system being attacked, the action taken against it, the number of nodes struck and the amount of time used to carry out the attacks will affect whether effects are cascading—sudden, catastrophic changes in system states that often affect surrounding related systems—or cumulative—building sequentially in

small amounts toward system change. The more compressed the attack across a wide spectrum of the system, the more likely cascading effects are to occur.

Effects occur at all levels of operations. The relationships of SA and the traditional (or customary) approach to warfare are illustrated in the figure **Strategic Attack and the Levels of War**. The effects of SA should be felt at the strategic level and then often cascades down to the operational and tactical levels. Effects upon fielded forces will generally be a byproduct of achieving broader strategic objectives. For example, the British retaliatory bombing of Berlin during the Battle of Britain shocked Nazi leadership, provoking a decisive change in their campaign's focus. German attacks that had been distributed across southern Britain (and were sorely taxing Royal Air Force [RAF] Fighter Command) now concentrated on London, greatly facilitating defense efforts, relieving pressure on the beleaguered RAF, and ultimately turning the tide of the battle in Britain's favor. Although the Berlin raid was an "indirect attack" in one sense, it had a direct effect upon the minds of Hitler and Goering. Subsequent effects cascaded down to the German Luftwaffe and the RAF at the operational and tactical levels.



Strategic Attack and the Levels of War

Systemic Effects

Every party to a conflict, whether a modern nation-state or terrorist organization, is an interactively complex, adaptive system. Every system has elements critical to its functioning: key strengths and sources of power. Some aspects or elements of every system are vulnerable to attack or influence. The key to understanding systemic effects is understanding how these two are related: what the system's critical vulnerabilities are. Each system has a leadership or governing function (e.g., Saddam Hussein and his

Ba'athist Party structure), some adaptable plan or strategy, some means of carrying out its strategy (armed forces or terrorist cadres), and key infrastructure supporting the system and allowing it to act on its strategy (communications, warfighting resources). SA seeks to incapacitate one or more of these key functions, either by affecting the functions themselves (attacks against leadership, for instance), or by affecting the linkages between them (as in severing the leadership's means of communication with its control mechanisms). Strategic attack may also undermine the elements providing support to these functions (for example, propaganda and internal security as they support leadership). Since components of complex systems are interrelated, affecting the appropriate linkages and nodes in one part of a system can cause cascading changes or failures throughout the system as a whole. Further, the disturbances that cause these changes can often be very small. Such efficiency is the soul of SA: finding those key relationships within systems where small inputs will yield desirable system-wide changes.

It is not possible to predict exactly what level of stress will cause a system to fail or change its behavior; that level may vary from day to day, even moment to moment. However, systems stressed with sufficient intensity and rapidity can suffer effects much like shock in the human body—relative inaction coupled with very low system energy levels. Shock is achieved when stress is induced faster than a system is able to adapt to it. Parallel attack may be the best means of inducing such shock: striking multiple targets across a system to induce system-wide stress while also striking critical nodes or vulnerabilities chosen to maximize dislocation effects within the system. This may hold the best prospect of causing cascading system-wide changes in behavior. SA is the critical method to create these effects and may be most efficient when conducted through parallel attack.

Decisive Effects

SA offers commanders many options for winning conflicts outright or for shaping them in decisive ways. It supports or underpins a variety of potential strategies.

Attacks on leadership can often provide significant strategic leverage. Attacks against Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, his inner circle, and his key security infrastructure during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM effectively decapitated the Iraqi military, opening the door for a swifter counterforce operation against Hussein's Republican Guard. Attacks against *al Qaeda* terrorist leaders across the globe since 2002 are another example, where removal of enemy leadership helped create continuing strategic advantage, at least temporarily. Leadership can be affected in a variety of ways, from removal to undermining popular support to isolation. Due to SA during Operation DESERT STORM, Saddam Hussein was not removed but was forced to take protective measures that effectively reduced his command and control capability.

SA can be a very flexible tool effective across the range of military operations (ROMO). Strikes against al Qaeda leadership took place during the major operations phase in Afghanistan, but those in Yemen, Pakistan, and other places were done outside the context of major operations, as part of the broader global war on terrorism. Cyberspace operations such as offensive operations against terrorist systems across the globe are

another example. This is an important insight: modern SA capabilities can create discrete, precise effects on short notice directly from the continental United States (CONUS). SA can be conducted across the ROMO, as the strategic context warrants.

SA can deny an enemy the means and resources it requires to continue a conflict. Allied air attacks against the German transportation and oil industries eventually crippled German war production and significantly reduced Germany's intertheater mobility, which in turn significantly degraded the Wehrmacht's ability to maneuver and fight. Many potential adversaries today do not produce their own weapons, complicating interdiction or destruction of warfighting means. In many cases, cyberspace capabilities can be used to deny an enemy access to financial and informational resources it needs to operate effectively and this can also help interdict the flow of weapons and other critical means of war. Such operations were used successfully against the Serbian regime during Operation ALLIED FORCE and have helped contain the terrorist efforts of many Islamic groups in recent years.

SA can deny an enemy strategic options or choices. One example is the defeat of enemy weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs. In WW II, British and Norwegian commandos successfully carried out raids against Nazi heavy-water stores while they were being transported from Norway to Germany. This SA denied the Germans a critical capability in developing their version of the atomic bomb. It was also an important element of US and coalition strategy during and after Operation DESERT STORM, as a combination of coalition air strikes and UN inspections sought to deny the Iraqi regime access to WMD.

SA can also defeat an enemy strategy that is "in play." During Operation DESERT STORM, SA against Iraqi surface-to-surface SCUD missiles, combined with strategic defensive measures and effective political initiatives, countered Saddam Hussein's intended strategy of breaking the US-led coalition by dragging Israel into the war. SCUD suppression efforts achieved the politically vital effect of dissuading Israeli retaliation and thus were critical to holding the coalition together, despite the fact that few SCUD "hard kills" were achieved.

SA can play an important part in a strategy designed to break apart an enemy warfighting coalition or use its system of alliances against it. In 1943, Allied air attacks against Rome played a crucial role both in driving Italian dictator Benito Mussolini from power and in coercing Mussolini's successor to surrender. Rome had been "off-limits" to Allied bombing until July 1943, when Allied leaders made a conscious decision to twice bomb a railyard near the center of the city in order to induce psychological shock that would help drive Italy from the war. The effort was successful and deprived the Axis one of its important component states. During Operation ALLIED FORCE, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) deliberate increase in the intensity of SA operations against Serbia coupled with its diplomatic initiatives helped convince Russia of NATO's resolve. Russia then used its influence to pressure Serbian president Milosevic to accede to NATO's demands, thus using Serbia's perceived ally against it.

SA can play a crucial role in coercing an enemy into adopting a desired course of action. Often, this involves accession to demands other than simple capitulation,

although that may be among the desired objectives. In successful instances, SA is most often coupled with complementary diplomatic and information initiatives. In December 1972, the US bombing campaign along with Operation POCKET MONEY (the mining of Haiphong harbor and other North Vietnamese ports) combined effectively with diplomatic pressure to coerce the North Vietnamese leadership to take part in the Paris peace talks. US-led efforts to defeat the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive in 1972 culminated in Operation LINEBACKER I (largely an aerial interdiction effort), which stopped North Vietnamese action in the field. This created the context for diplomatic initiatives, which made good progress until after the US November elections. Post-election North Vietnamese diplomatic retrenchment was answered with Operation LINEBACKER II's SAs against COGs in Hanoi and Haiphong harbor, which effectively coerced the North Vietnamese into signing a peace accord amenable to the US. As previously mentioned, coercion efforts also drove Milosevic to withdraw his troops from Kosovo and sign the peace agreement ending Operation ALLIED FORCE.
