



ANNEX 3-70 STRATEGIC ATTACK

REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSESSMENT

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Strategic attack (SA) is able to impose systemic, functional, and psychological effects that may achieve strategic objectives more directly than defeat of enemy fielded forces does. Historically, the ability to measure such effects in order to gauge effectiveness (overall progress toward objectives) has been very limited. Traditional assessment efforts were geared to analyzing the immediate, physical effects of combat: the attrition of enemy troops or equipment, or the damage to facilities caused directly by bombs or other weapons. Planners and analysts during WW II, Vietnam, and even Operation DESERT STORM lacked tools with which to evaluate their progress. Even the US Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) after WW II, as deep and comprehensive an analysis as has ever been done, relied on very simplistic linear measures to gauge economic effects of the Allied bombing effort, ignoring much beyond direct production figures. This missed many of the indirect effects—military, economic, political, and psychological—such as the diversion of resources to air defense and the growing popular pressure for retaliation that led the Nazi regime to waste resources on largely ineffective terror weapons like the V-1 and V-2.

In general, strategists need to know what kind of indicators can be used to determine progress toward achievement of particular effects and objectives. Most of the indicators available are objective and quantitative; they help measure physical effects. What is often most important for SA operations are subjective and qualitative indicators that help measure indirect effects, especially in realms like economic and psychological impact. These will most likely have to be derived by planners themselves, or by the analysts and intelligence managers assisting them. Some easily quantifiable measures exist, but they may often be deceiving (like the USSBS' production figures). Planners may be tempted to use them because they are easy to obtain, but should understand their limitations. Some qualitative measures may be straightforward; if enemy capitulation is the objective, it either happens or it doesn't. Most will be much less "black or white," involving a range or gradation of possible effects that will be hard to measure objectively. The indirect economic effects of Allied bombing during WW II are examples; so are the beneficial effects that friendly actions have upon parties outside a conflict, like the influence NATO attacks on Serbia had in getting the Russians to coax Milosevic to concede during operation ALLIED FORCE (OAF). Nonetheless, these are

real effects that may have a great deal more influence upon strategy and the conduct of operations than do more easily quantifiable effects.

Progress toward accomplishment of even straightforward objectives like surrender can often be very difficult to measure. In many cases, [complex systems](#) accumulate effects over time that move them toward a change in state or behavior, but may not exhibit indicators of change until a critical point is reached, at which time the system will fail catastrophically. The point at which this “catastrophe” will occur is often impossible to predict reliably. This was the case with the final deterioration of the German war economy in early 1945, the sudden and unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the rapid collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. This unpredictability may frustrate strategists and leaders as a conflict progresses and may translate into pressure to change courses of action (COA), refocus efforts, or divert resources from SA prematurely.
