



## THE EFFECTS-BASED APPROACH TO OPERATIONS (EBAO)

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- The [effects-based approach to operations](#) (EBAO) is defined as “an approach in which operations are planned, executed, assessed, and adapted to influence or change systems or capabilities in order to achieve desired outcomes.”
- EBAO is not a planning methodology; it is a way of thinking about operations that provides guidance for design, planning, execution, and assessment as an integral whole. More specifically, EBAO is an approach in which:
  - ✦ Operations are driven by desired ends (objectives and [end states](#)), and should be expressed in terms of desired [effects](#), not defined by what available forces or capabilities can do.

### Principles of EBAO

- EBAO is comprehensive—it cuts across all domains and dimensions, disciplines, levels, and [instruments of national power](#). EBAO provides an overarching way of thinking about action that encompasses [operational design](#), planning, execution, and [assessment](#) of operations across the [range of military operations](#).
- EBAO integrates [strategy](#)—all design, planning, execution, and assessment efforts—into a unitary whole.
- EBAO emphasizes that war is a uniquely human endeavor—a dynamic and often unpredictable process involving the collision of interactively complex, adaptive systems.
- EBAO emphasizes that warfare is non-linear and “interactively complex.”
- **Causes and effects are** usually hard to trace and harder to demonstrate, since common “linear” rules do not apply. **Most cause-effect relationships important to warfighters involve indirect and often intangible, unquantifiable linkages that are normally discerned inductively (through real-world observation), not deductively (by proving a theorized outcome through logic alone).**
- EBAO should account for how all actors, especially the adversary, may respond to planned actions.

- ✦ Commanders and strategists should also consider that the beliefs, customs, and habits of adversaries not trained in a Western worldview may not respond in ways anticipated by Americans (mirror imaging), potentially creating unanticipated and unfavorable higher-order effects.
- **EBAO is about creating effects, not about platforms, weapons, or particular methods.**
- **EBAO focuses on behavior, not just physical changes.**
- ✦ EBAO emphasizes that there are alternatives; that the ultimate aim in war is not just to overthrow the enemy's military power, but to compel them to do one's will.
- **EBAO seeks to achieve objectives most effectively, then to the degree possible, most efficiently.**
- **EBAO should consider all possible types of effects.**
- ✦ Warfare has traditionally focused on direct effects and more immediate indirect effects like attrition. An effects-based approach should consider the full array of outcomes in order to give decision-makers a wider range of options and provide a realistic estimation of unintended consequences.
- **EBAO is not new.**
- ✦ History's great commanders approached warfare from an effects-based perspective, though not so named, when they looked beyond mere destruction of enemy forces to the more general problem of bending the enemy to their will.

*For more complete discussion of EBAO, [click here](#).*

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