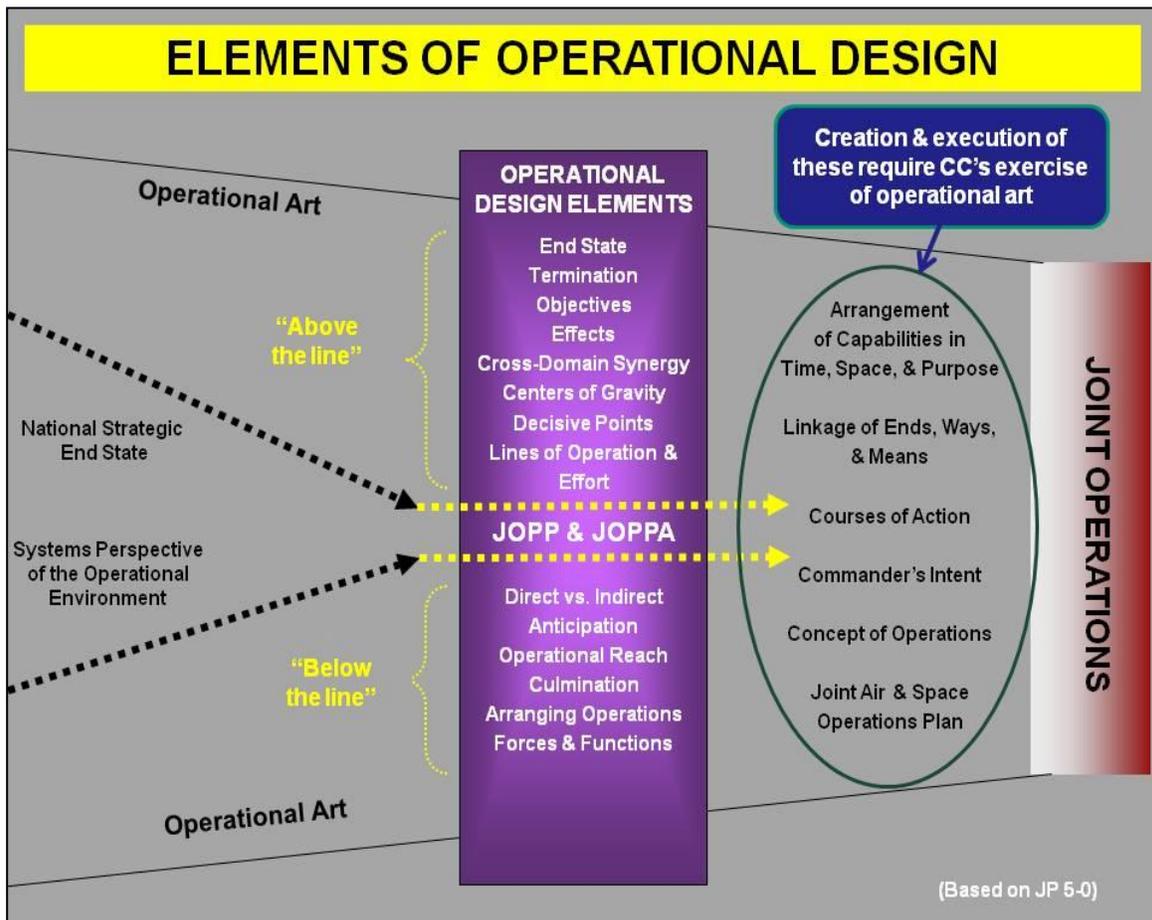




OPERATIONAL DESIGN

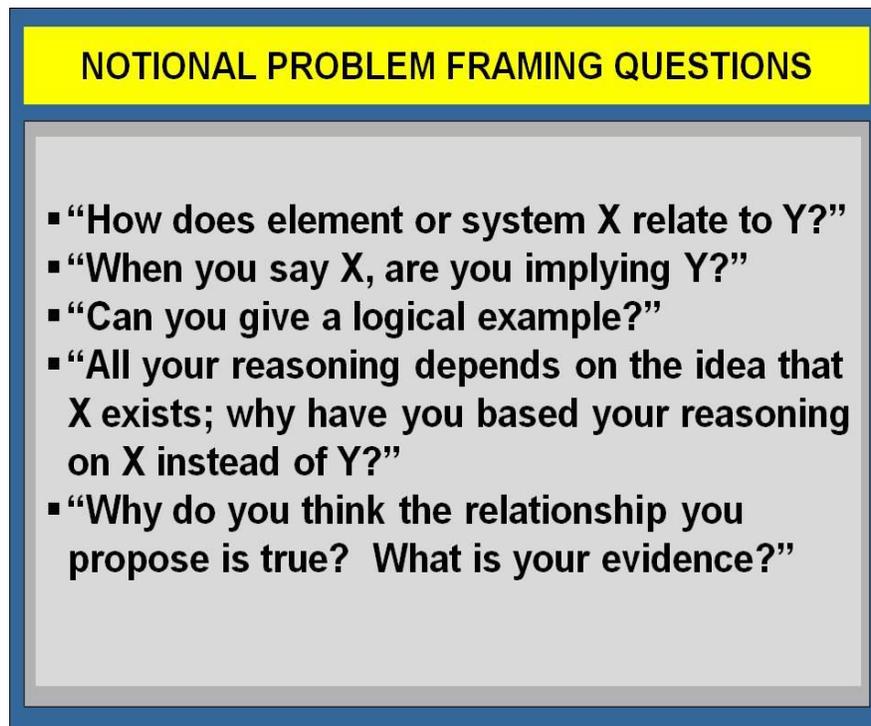
Last Updated: 22 Nov 2016

- Operational design (OD) is the first level of strategy implementation and rests upon operational art, which is “the cognitive approach by commanders and staff—supported by their skill, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means” (JP 3-0, Joint Operations). This is illustrated in the following figure, Elements of Operational Design.



Problem Framing

- **Operational design begins with “problem framing”—establishing the context of a situation within which the commander should act in order to realize the operation’s aims, by examining the problem from many different perspectives.**
 - ★ Problem framing entails determining the overall boundaries and aims of the operation.
 - ★ Commanders and their staffs should be able to answer the kinds of disciplined questions depicted in the following figure, Notional Problem Framing Questions, which probe basic reasons and evidence for an emerging framework, “setting the stage” for breaking the problem down into medium- and well-structured components that planners can “solve.”

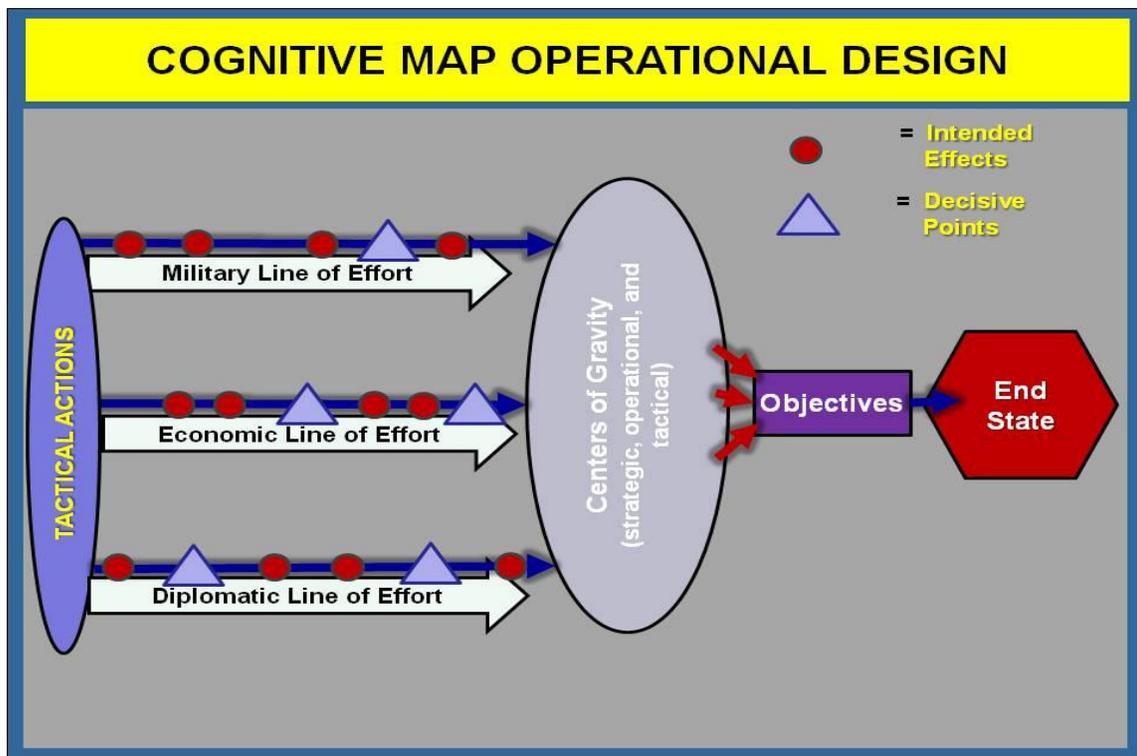


- As commanders and their staffs work through framing problems, they face several tasks that help provide structure to their efforts and make it easier to break ill-structured problems into smaller “chunks” of medium- to well-structured problems. These tasks are depicted in the following figure, Problem Framing Tasks.

PROBLEM FRAMING TASKS

- Determine the strategic context and systemic nature of the problem(s)
- Synthesize strategic guidance
- Identify strategic trends
- Identify gaps in knowledge and assumptions about the problem(s)
- Identify the operational problem
- Devise and gain approval for the initial mission statement

- The following figure, Cognitive Map Operational Design¹, depicts a summary “cognitive map” of the alignment of operational design’s key elements. It depicts how actions at the tactical level lead to effects, which can be usefully depicted using lines of effort (LOEs).



¹ Adapted from Jeffrey M. Reilly, *Operational Design: Distilling Clarity for Decisive Action*.

✦ LOEs lay out critical desired effects, [decisive points](#) (DPs), and other events along a timeline that relates these to centers of gravity, commander's objectives, and the operation's end state in a manner that shows relationships between all elements, but is easy to comprehend.

- *For more complete discussion of this topic, [click here](#).*
-