

## Next Generation Strategy: Is Effects-Based Strategy Worth Pursuing?

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### What is Effects-Based Strategy?

In recent years defence and security thinkers have been bombarded by a succession of new terms, suggesting that major changes were underway in the nature of warfare. The three Military-Technological Revolutions (in sensors, weapons and information technology), Air-Land Battle, the Revolution in Military Affairs, Knowledge Warfare, Network-Centric Warfare, Decisive Manoeuvre, Rapid Dominance Warfare and Rapid Decisive Operations are just a few of the new terms that have been generated. All of these concepts arguably carry elements of value. In general, they reflect the impact of new military technologies, the opportunities for novel advances in military operations and the strong imperative for defence organizations to experiment with better ways of conducting their business.

The concepts listed above mostly, however, describe improved tactical and operational *means* of conducting military operations. They do not question the fundamentals of strategy itself. In particular, they don't challenge the definition of *strategic ends*.

There is, however, one new line of thought that has emerged during the last decade that does potentially challenge some of the fundamentals of strategy. I am referring to effects-based strategy or effects-based security. These concepts propose that strategy – and all subsidiary operational activities - should be driven directly in order to achieve specific, highly desirable political outcomes. The primary focus of such a strategy should be on the policy positions of relevant decision-makers – mainly those on the opposing side – and that *all* means, diplomatic, information, military, economic, social (or societal), technical and other should be employed to encourage these decision makers to shift their stances to positions that are compatible with one's own.

In his recent discussion on the philosophy of effects-based operations, Alan Stephens describes this methodology as one in which 'the desired effect/outcome of any action, regardless of its scale, should be identified before that action is initiated, and ideally should be complemented by its

associated ways and means'.<sup>1</sup> Edward Smith, in his path-breaking book on the subject defines effects-based operations as a 'coordinated set of actions directed at shaping the behaviour of friends, foes and neutrals in peace, crisis and war'.<sup>2</sup>

At its heart, this kind of thinking is hardly new. After all, Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese strategist, stated that 'attaining of one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the true pinnacle of excellence. Subjugating the enemy without fighting is the true pinnacle of excellence'.<sup>3</sup> A major theme of Clausewitz was that 'now if we reflect that War has its root in a political object, then naturally this original motive which called it into existence should also continue the first and highest consideration in its conduct'.<sup>4</sup>

Much more recently, Basil Liddell-Hart also highlighted these connections as being central to strategy:

The object in war is a better state of peace – even if only from your own point of view. Hence, it is essential to conduct war with a constant regard to the peace you desire.....History shows that gaining military victory is not in itself equivalent to gaining the object of policy. But as most of the thinking about war has been done by men of the military profession there has been a very natural tendency to lose sight of the basic national object, and identify it with the military aim. In consequence, whenever war has broken out, policy has too often been governed by the military aim – and this has been regarded as an end in itself, instead of as merely a means to an end.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, the idea of focusing strategic action directly on changing the policy position of the enemy is certainly far from new. The main problem with this logic in the past has simply been that it has been difficult to implement in practice. Many of the tools required to conduct such operations have been unavailable. This has meant that for most of history nation states and other key international actors have needed to resort to very blunt instruments in order to bring their opponents to heel. They have frequently needed to build massive military forces and develop an array of expensive economic and other instruments in order to deter, coerce and, not infrequently, to physically force, opponents to submit to their will. Whilst there unquestionably remains a place for such blunt employment of force, it can be argued that there are now new opportunities for key international actors to secure positive outcomes through the application of much more precise, tailored and carefully measured instruments of persuasion.

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<sup>1</sup> A Stephens, *The End of Strategy: Effects-Based Operations*, Working Paper No. 383, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, December 2003, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> E A Smith, *Effects Based Operations – Applying Network Centric Warfare in Peace, Crisis, and War*, CCRP Publication Series (no date or place of publication), p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> R D Sawyer, *The Complete Art of War: Sun Tzu, Sun Pin*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996, p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> C von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Anatol Rapoport, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 119.

<sup>5</sup> B H Liddell Hart, *Strategy – The Indirect Approach*, Faber & Faber Ltd, London, 1967, p. 351.

## Why is Effects-based Strategy Feasible Now?

It is argued in this paper that several developments in the international environment are bringing the practical employment of effects-based strategy more within reach now than ever before. These new strategic opportunities largely spring from:

- the processes of globalization that generate greater international transparency, higher levels of interdependence and exposure to a much larger menu of international influences;
- rapid advances in international communications and in tailored sensor systems that provide new and better opportunities to reach directly opposing leaders and those who are close to them and to monitor their responses to changed circumstances and external pressures;
- marked advances in the sophistication of many military systems, providing unprecedented potential to tailor precisely the scale, type, location and timing of physical destruction;
- the advance of the processes of democratization making the leaderships of most major state and non-state organisations more beholden to pressures from their citizens or memberships.

Effects-based strategy (EBS) seeks to exploit these and related developments in order to apply a range of pressures directly against relevant opposing decision-makers in order to encourage/persuade/coerce them to adopt positions compatible with one's own.

In this sense, EBS acknowledges that the heart of strategy is the battle of wills between the opposing decision-making elites. EBS planning hence begins by identifying the preferred outcome(s) or positions that one wishes these people to adopt. Then, springing from a deep understanding of the opposing elite's culture, attitudes, circumstances, etc, EBS planners select and apply a succession of finely tailored measures that, in combination, are designed to move the opposing decision-makers to a policy position that one prefers.

## How Might Effects-Based Strategy Work in Practice?

### HYPOTHETICAL 1

President Walter of Nangaland has no intention of giving way to the ambitions of General Resta, the leader of the regime in Kamaria. He fiercely resists General Resta's assertion of sovereignty over the disputed strip of seabed until in late June, when he is approached by the Kamarian ambassador. In a private conversation, the ambassador advises President Walter that he has lost effective control of his secret Swiss bank accounts

and that his daughter, who is studying in Kamaria, has been taken on a 'protected holiday' to an undisclosed location. He encourages President Walter to contemplate these developments overnight and consider the scope for an honourable and early compromise on the seabed issue.

When the ambassador departs, Kamarian sensors in the presidential palace and three spies on his staff monitor closely President Walter's reactions. At first, he responds with anger and smashes a decorative platter in his office. However, within an hour he has summoned relevant officials to discuss possible compromise positions on the seabed dispute.

On the following day, the Kamarian ambassador again visits President Walter, armed with a well-developed understanding of President Walter's bottom line. First, the ambassador shows the president a video of his daughter holidaying at a seaside location, and assures him that she is well and in good spirits. Then, in a surprise move, the ambassador tables a proposed approach to resolving the seabed issue that addresses most of President Walter's concerns. What's more, the ambassador suggests a series of steps that would have the effect of making the outcome appear to be a political victory for President Walter within Nangaland. The discussion thence focuses primarily on how to implement these plans and how to best ensure that the benefits of the proposed compromise are fully delivered.

Two months later, at a carefully choreographed summit meeting, President Walter and General Resta sign a seabed agreement and announce a new era of cooperative development between the two countries. President Walter's daughter flies home the following day and he also receives a coded statement of the balances of his secret Swiss bank accounts.

## **HYPOTHETICAL 2**

President Kwan Kim refuses to order a cessation of Jaffaland's rapidly developing nuclear weapons program. Despite numerous representations from a range of countries and several United Nations Security Council resolutions, Kim refuses to budge.

The Prime Minister of Northern Halifax and the President of Calgary, who have long been concerned by Kim's intransigence, decide to bring the issue to a head. These close allies have in recent months been monitoring President Kim's attitudes, policy positions and plans exceptionally closely. However, when they move to communicate directly with Kim, he responds by ordering an escalating series of armed clashes on his border with Calgary and disappears into one of several underground command centres in the mountains.

In these circumstances, the Prime Minister of Northern Halifax and the President of Calgary agree a plan to pressure Kim to relent by threatening

and then attacking the core interests of some of Kim's family members and his closest friends. In early September, two weeks after the start of the crisis, three of Kim's family and eleven of his close associates receive cell phone calls, SMS and email messages advising that their business premises and family holiday houses would be destroyed unless President Kim comes to his senses, halts the border incidents and ceases Jaffaland's nuclear weapons program. Whilst it is not possible to monitor Kim's thinking closely in his underground command centre, there is no discernable change in his position during the following 48 hours.

The next night, the shoe factory owned by Kim's brother is destroyed by a precision air strike and the holiday houses of two of Kim's close associates are demolished. New cell phone calls remind Kim's associates that their personal assets remain very vulnerable if Jaffaland does not moderate its behaviour. During the following 24 hours Calgary intelligence detects several of Kim's associates taking steps to convince Kim to re-consider his position. The following night the seaside retreat of Kim's golfing partner is bombed.

In mid-September, Kim orders his foreign minister to announce that in a spirit of reconciliation with Calgary and with the international community, the Government of Jaffaland would shortly commence consultations with relevant governments on halting its nuclear weapons programs and opening relevant facilities to international inspection.

Such hypothetical use of EBS might, to many, seem far-fetched and highly improbable. However, a variant of *Hypothetical 2* was, in fact, employed effectively against President Milosevic in Serbia in 1998. In response to his intransigent position in Kosovo, the Western allies first threatened – largely through cell phone calls and other messages – the businesses, holiday houses and other assets of several of Milosevic's close associates. In order to encourage them to twist the president's arm strongly, several of these facilities were destroyed and the result was that Milosevic changed his stance.<sup>6</sup> This so-called 'crony targeting' was shown, in those circumstances, to be effective.

Similarly, prior to and during *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, United States and other allied forces made extensive use of cell phone, email and other messaging to persuade key members of Saddam Hussein's regime and armed forces to refrain from using chemical, biological and radiological weapons.<sup>7</sup> Several key commanders were also reportedly bribed to disobey

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<sup>6</sup> See this reported in, for instance, W Arkin and R Windrem, *The Other Kosovo War*, Special to MSNBC, 29 August 2001, <<http://www.msnbc.com/news/607032.asp?cp1=1>>.

<sup>7</sup> A Krepinevich, *Operation Iraqi Freedom – A First-Blush Assessment*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington DC, 2003, pp. 17-18, 32 and also W J Boyne, *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, Forge Books, New York, 2003, p. 34.

the regime's orders and many others were persuaded to abandon their posts or redeploy their units in non-threatening ways as allied forces approached. The consequences were far-reaching, leading to the speedy disintegration of most of Saddam Hussein's forces and to the capture of Baghdad within 12 days of the land campaign's launch.

## **How Might an Effects-Based Strategic Campaign be Developed?**

It will already be clear from this discussion that EBS should always be driven by a very clear definition of the *ends* that are sought. The *ways* and the *means* that might be appropriate are always subsidiary.

### **THE ENDS OF AN EBS CAMPAIGN**

The *ends* of an EBS campaign would normally be expressed in terms of securing an opponent's agreement, or acquiescence to, a political objective – or possibly a set of political objectives. For instance, in Hypothetical 1 above, General Resta might state Kamaria's EBS goal as 'Securing the acquiescence of the Nangaland decision-making elite to Kamaria's sovereignty over the bulk of the disputed seabed.' In general, the political goals of such a campaign will be expressed in terms of achieving a cognitive shift in the key opposing individual(s). They might presume a need to shape, deter and coerce the key opponents to shift their political stance.

### **THE WAYS OF AN EBS CAMPAIGN**

There are many ways in which an opposing decision-making elite might be influenced to shift its position in a direction that one would favour. Some of these ways are direct and some indirect. Some are very subtle and barely detectable to those not directly involved and others are very blunt and obvious. In most circumstances, the most effective EBS campaign would contain a mix of incentives and threats; i.e. a mix of 'carrots' and 'sticks'.

An appropriate place in which to start thinking about the ways of exerting the desired forms of influence in an EBS campaign is to consider John Warden's five strategic rings, indicated in Figure 1 below.<sup>8</sup> Warden argues that, whenever possible, a campaign should aim directly at the opposing leadership. However if, for some reason, the leadership cannot be targeted directly, then one should target the 'organic essentials' of the regime. This would include those systems upon which the leadership's survival and success depends ( food, electricity and money supply, etc). However, if

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<sup>8</sup> J A Warden III, 'Air Theory for the Twenty-First Century', in *Battlefield of the Future* (A volume prepared at the US Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, <<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/battle/bftoc.html>>).

there are few organic essentials that are within reach, one should target the next layer – that of infrastructure, and so on. Effectively, one's targeting choices, under this logic, are determined by their potential to exert either direct or indirect influence on the opposing decision-making elite. As such, targeting options need to be assessed for their criticality in the opponent's 'centre of gravity'.

Warden also discusses the potential of 'parallel warfare', or the concept that several target layers might be attacked simultaneously in order to achieve desirable synergistic effects.

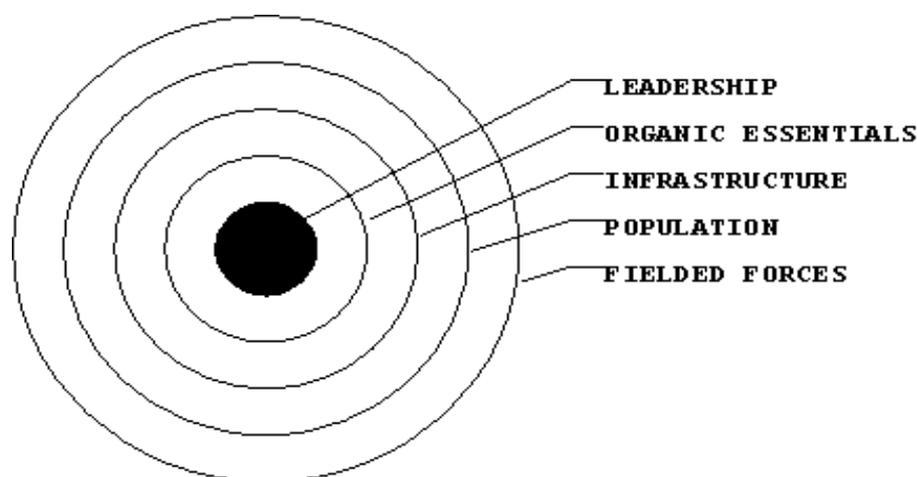
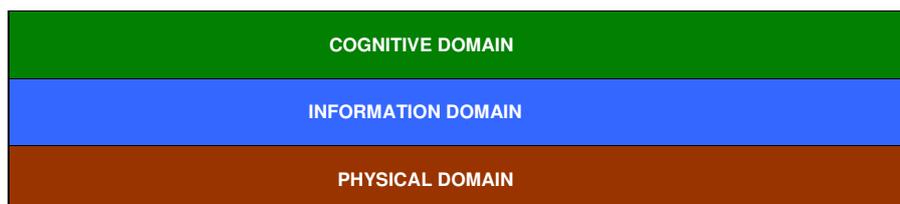


Figure 1: John Warden's Five Strategic Rings

However, as Ed Smith rightly emphasizes, there is more than one level on which the opposing leadership – or for that matter any other of Warden's target rings - can be attacked. Smith's hierarchy of modes is illustrated in Figure 2 below.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Edward A Smith *Effects Based Operations – Applying Network Centric Warfare in Peace, Crisis, and War* (CCRP Publication Series (no date or place of publication)), p.161



**Figure 2: The Three Domains of Conflict**

At the most obvious level, the opposing leadership might be attacked *physically*. For instance, a very precise bombing strike might be launched to kill key opposing leaders – and, hence, ‘decapitate’ the opposing regime. This may or may not be a sensible path to follow if one seeks a favourable political outcome. Killing the opposing leadership might, in many circumstances, make the achievement of a favourable political outcome more, not less, difficult.

A second possibility highlighted by Smith, and discussed at length by David Connery,<sup>10</sup> is to work to modify the *information* flows and reference points available to the opposing elite. This level of attack might interfere with both public and classified information flows to the opposing elite with the aim of encouraging policy movement in a favourable direction.

A third, and generally preferred level of operation described by Smith, is to aim at the opposition at the *cognitive* level. The objective here would be, for instance, to exert direct influence on the opposing leadership through diplomatic persuasion, offering incentives or delivering threats. A case in point is the Kamarian campaign approach described above to convince President Walter to change his stance. The obvious advantage of aiming to work primarily at this cognitive level is the direct manner of its potential to change the key decision-makers’ minds.

Smith’s three domains of conflict can also be employed with the target rings identified by Warden. For instance, the so-called ‘crony targeting’ employed in Bosnia was, in effect, a combined cognitive and physical attack on some of the leadership elements surrounding Milosevic’s regime – his close family, friends and trusted supporters. These people felt so intimidated by the allied

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<sup>10</sup> D Connery, *Trash or Treasure? Knowledge Warfare and the Shape of Future War*, Working Paper No. 378, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra, October 2003, pp. 4-8.

threats and tightly focused bombing strikes that they were prepared to pressure Milosevic strongly to modify his position.

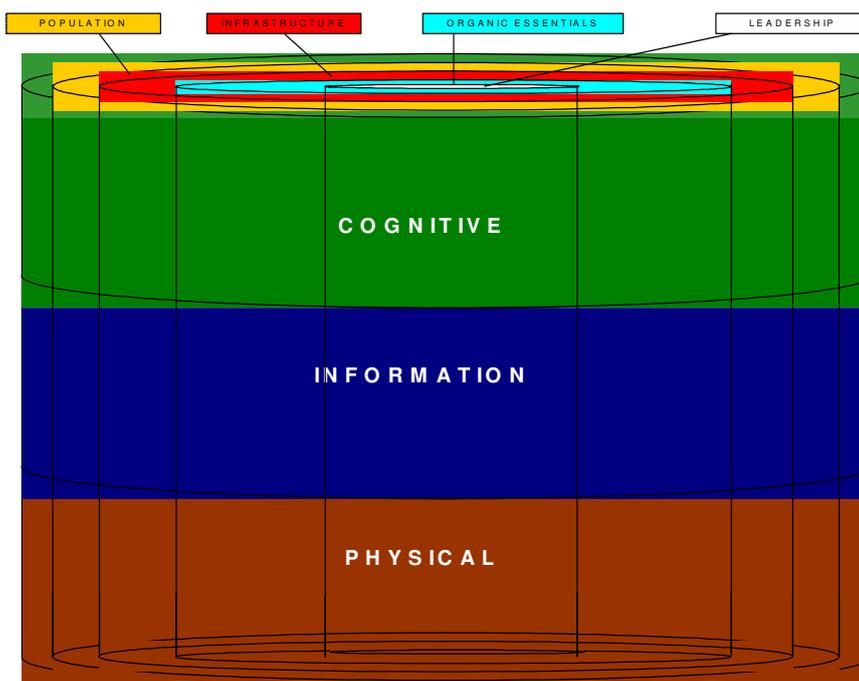
One can imagine cognitive and information attacks against essential infrastructure systems designed to put great pressure on an opposing decision-making elite. Attacks of this nature might include distortions to information flows feeding stock exchanges and banking systems, to psychological and selected pressures being applied to mariners to discourage them from entering the key port of an opposing country.

Figure 3 attempts to combine the logics of Warden and Smith in order to draw out another dimension of EBS targeting. The logic of Smith's approach is that, where possible, there should be a clear preference for targeting the cognitive domain – the domain in which the opposing side perceives developments, assesses alternatives and makes decisions. If one can influence the cognitive domain, then one is affecting directly the element of greatest importance to securing a favourable outcome. The alternatives, of aiming at the opponent's information or physical domains are more indirect means of influencing the opposition's decision-making. In those domains the informational and physical effects must be detected, interpreted and processed by the opposing elite in order to have a cognitive effect. In consequence, the nature of the cognitive effects are generally less predictable and less certain, because they are more removed from the direct cognitive domain.

If one combines this logic with Warden's five strategic rings one can see in Figure 3 (below) the desirability of considering targeting strategies, in the first instance, that are aimed directly at the leadership in the cognitive domain. Indeed, this figure suggests that, in general, the most effective strategies for achieving desired political effects are likely to be those that are located towards the 'core' of the cylinder – particularly in its uppermost layer. Hence, an effective EBS campaign would normally target the leadership and other close layers identified by Warden and do so primarily in the cognitive domain.

Whilst these general principles of targeting preference are helpful, few EBS campaigns are likely to consist only of an opening 'play'. EBS campaigns can be expected to be as dynamic as any other and to contain several phases of action – some of which may be very closely spaced and others of which might be widely separated in time.

**Figure 3**  
**Targeting Preferences in an EBS Campaign**

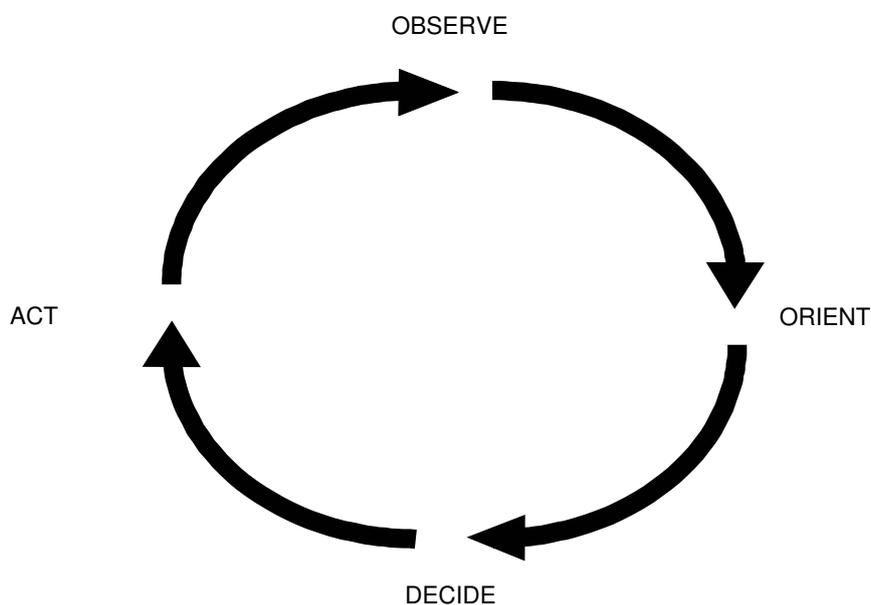


In thinking about the progress of an EBS campaign over time it is useful to consider John Boyd's OODA loop. This is displayed in Figure 4 below.<sup>11</sup> Essentially Boyd argued that in conflict situations decision-makers move through the Observe, Orient, Decide and Act loop continuously as the situation develops. One important conclusion that he reached was that if one could move through the OODA loop faster than the opponent (assisted by superior sensors, better processing and situational displays, superior decision aids and a broader menu effective options for action), the opponent is likely to be rapidly out-maneuvred and defeated.

In recent years many strategic analysts and military planners have interpreted Boyd's OODA loop as being an effective and highly-disciplined approach to running the opponent's military forces 'ragged'. By being able to see and interpret events in the theatre with superior clarity and speed and

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed explanation see D S Fadok, *John Boyd and John Warden: Air Power's Quest for Strategic Paralysis*, (a thesis presented to the School of Advanced Aerospace Studies, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, June 1994, <<http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/fadok.htm>>.

then being able to select and apply appropriate forestalling or counter actions well before the opponent can act, it is possible to either destroy, or render untenable, the military opposition. This theatre and tactical application of Boyd's thinking is perfectly valid. However, in an EBS campaign the developments of greatest value on which direct observation would be at a premium would probably not be military aircraft or warship movements, etc, but rather at the strategic level and focused on the reactions of the opposing decision-makers to the various stimuli that may be introduced.



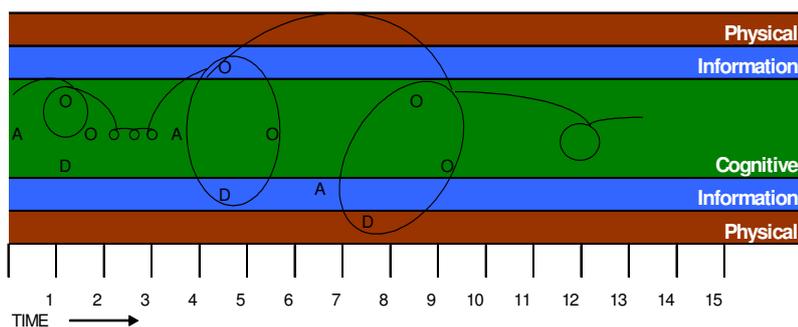
**Figure 4: John Boyd's OODA Loop**

In Hypothetical 1 it is Kamaria's possession of sensors and spies in President Walter's office accommodation that permits the Kamarian leadership to Observe, Orient and then Decide on a highly tailored set of next steps that are designed specifically to encourage President Walter to move to a position that is acceptable to their interests.

An attempt at portraying a progression of such EBS 'engagements' is made in Figure 5. Here Boyd's OODA loop is made to repeat over time – or to 'roll' through the course of a campaign. What's more, in the first couple of orbits the action all takes place in the cognitive domain (and quickly) – possibly through the communication of pressure *via* diplomats. Hence, the OODA orbits are relatively small and closely spaced. However, it soon becomes necessary to involve instruments in the informational and physical domains

in order to secure the desired effects on the opposing leadership – portrayed in the figure as the larger circuits that stray into the broader domains. These larger loops could, for instance, entail the seeding of disturbing information or threats via emails or SMS messages to key people close to the leadership. Alternatively, they might require the destruction of a symbolic or illustrative target, or targets, chosen for their anticipated leverage on the opposing decision-makers. If these illustrative strikes in the broader domains prove successful, Figure 5 suggests that the final orbit of the OODA loop returns to the cognitive domain and might be expected to involve direct communication to settle the terms of the political outcome. This might be concluded relatively quickly, as indicated here, or alternatively, might require significant time lags.

**Figure 5**  
**Representation of Rolling EBS Campaign**



We would, however, be wise not to assume that the processes of persuading or coercing an opposing decision-making elite to shift positions to something more compatible with one's interests would be predictable or simple. All social structures of the type we are considering here will be complex adaptive systems that will run on their own cultures, sets of values, interests and internal mechanisms. Understanding in advance the way such decision-making groups will respond to particular external stimuli is fraught with challenges. One would clearly need to possess not only a very detailed understanding of the given society's culture, etc. That would not be enough. One would also need to be so intimately familiar with the histories and habits of the key personalities and their relationships with each other that one could effectively 'get inside their heads'. When one is advanced in this respect, campaign planners would be in a superior position to evaluate the likely responses of the targeted personalities to a wide menu of operational options. However, even when these processes of evaluation, known as

Operational Net Assessments, are conducted with great care and in the light of quality information, they are always hedged about by uncertainty. Leaders, or maybe a key individual in the group, could decide to act in a manner that is not anticipated. This will always be a risk of which campaign planning needs to take into account. Various back-up steps and operational options would need to be held in readiness should the opposing elite not move in a desired or anticipated direction.

Hence, when preparing and launching an EBS campaign it would clearly be essential to have on-hand extremely knowledgeable and well-informed advisors who can effectively model the more likely responses of the opposing elite in a range of circumstances. It would also be essential to prepare a layered series of options that can be employed at short notice, if required, to coerce an opponent to move in a desired direction if his initial responses are in another, undesired, direction. Whilst some of these additional response options may be in the uppermost core of Figure 4 (ie directly targeting the leadership in the cognitive domain), many would move to the informational and physical domains and into the wider rings of Warden's hierarchy of targets.

Conducting operations with this level of attempted precision would require extraordinary levels of close-to-real-time intelligence, very high levels of command capacity and exceptional operational flexibility in order to maintain the initiative. However, if done well, an EBS campaign of this nature would appear to have the potential to be exceptionally effective.

A tailored EBS campaign of this kind would also be very difficult to counter. Were a targeted leadership to decide to change direction markedly, this should be detected very quickly and, were appropriate mechanisms in place, there should be a menu of options 'on the shelf' that could thwart such aberrant behaviour at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Certainly EBS would provide a national government with many more options that would be deliverable with far greater precision and in much shorter timeframes than would be the case were conventional campaign planning employed.

#### **THE MEANS OF AN EBS CAMPAIGN – THE EBS ARSENAL**

Whilst not pretending to be in any sense comprehensive, the following section discusses briefly some of the key operational tools and approaches that one would wish to have well prepared for any nation state's EBS operations. It should be noted that these tools are useful for both peacetime and crisis operations. In peacetime they would typically be used to help shape the international environment and, in particular, to help guide international developments to accord with one's interests. Some of the instruments relevant to those circumstances are various forms of 'soft' power – such as educational services, cultural and sporting events and various

forms of commercial and diplomatic activity designed to positively attract key elements of other societies to adopt favourable dispositions. Other peacetime operations may use 'hard' power instruments – such as economic strength, technological sophistication and military forces – to demonstrate their capacities, impress other relevant elites and, in so doing, to contribute to the country's deterrence of hostile action.

In crisis situations, many of these same tools would be used in different ways so as to dissuade, coerce, isolate and, when appropriate, to destroy. Manipulation of information flows, economic pressures and the selected use of military force would all have a role in many crises.

Some of the more important tools in an EBS arsenal would be the following:

a. Deeply Focused Intelligence

A key distinguishing feature of EBS over standard campaign operations is the depth of knowledge of, and the capacity to monitor with some precision, the opposing side's key decision-makers. For most countries this would require very substantial changes in intelligence priorities, skills, systems and many other things besides. Deep knowledge would need to be developed of potential opponents' (and maybe other parties') cultures, habits, predilections, decision-making systems, etc. A priority need would be to effectively model the behaviour of key individuals and groups of individuals – primarily the opposing decision-making elite. This would be a very major challenge, but such systems and expertise could conceivably be built over many years by observing key individuals closely and continually attempting to predict their responses to anticipated events.

Developing a finely-tuned predictive capacity of this sort within one's intelligence community would, however, be only part of the intelligence challenge. It would also be critical to have agents, technical and other systems in place so that one is able to monitor closely the opposing key decision-maker's behaviour when required. In normal peace-time circumstances such monitoring could be expected to be relatively loose and designed primarily to detect opportunities for influencing key leaders, their associates and others in positive ways. However, in periods of tension or crisis there would be a premium on being able to tighten surveillance of opposing decision-making elites. This would not be easy to achieve, but would be essential if one was to have a finely-tuned capacity to orchestrate each step of an EBS campaign through a crisis. Weaknesses in such close to real-time monitoring of the opposing decision-makers would increase markedly the uncertainties entailed in such operations and could also be expected to force more frequent indirect actions to influence the elite –

actions outside the cognitive domain and in the outer rings of Warden's strategic targeting model.

b. Close to Real-time Communications, Command and Control

In peacetime it would be important for the national command authorities to be alert for opportunities to launch diplomatic, cultural, educational political or other initiatives that are likely to strengthen favourable attitudes and approaches by key people in priority countries and strengthen the positives in the relationship. These issues would need to be seen as a core national priority on an on-going basis.

In the lead-up to and during a crisis having precise knowledge of an opposing decision-making elite's developing thinking is only as useful as the capacity for one's own leaders to respond appropriately. One's national leaders need to appreciate such dynamic situations quickly, to be able to decide the next steps and to be able to manage the delivery of preferred actions with precision in appropriate timeframes.

In Australia's case the National Security Committee (NSC) of Federal Cabinet would be the key decision-making body. The members of this committee would need to be educated and, in effect, trained for the sorts of roles and the types and timeframes of decision with which they would be confronted in many crises. This may challenge some mindsets. In order to work well, it would require specialized support staff and, probably, tailored, protected and highly secure command facilities. The entire communications, command and control system would also need to be exercised periodically in realistic scenarios.

c. Special Diplomatic Capacities

One obvious consequence of adopting an EBS approach would be to increase markedly the importance of a country's ambassadors, high commissioners and other foreign-deployed diplomatic staff. These people's powers of observation, perception, assessment and communication would frequently be at a premium in EBS campaigns. In many circumstances they would need to operate within a 'directive control' framework, understanding fully the commander's (in Australia's case, the NSC's) intent, but with authority to exercise flexibility on the spot, especially during direct negotiations with opposing leaders, in order to achieve a desired outcome.

It might be argued that many senior diplomatic staff already possess the skills and other attributes that would be required. However, clearly not all could be relied upon to operate optimally within the new, more demanding

EBS paradigm. This may have consequences for the resource levels committed to the diplomatic service, for the processes of staff development and training and for a number of other factors.

d. Sharpened Information Warfare Capabilities

Australia's, and most other Western country's, capacities to plan, conduct and effectively manage information operations in crisis situations are rudimentary. There are many reasons for this, not least being the reticence in advanced democracies to sanction manipulation of the free flow of information. However, in many crisis situations, advanced capabilities in this field may be critical to the strategic outcome.

A possible way for advanced democracies to proceed in this field would be to establish tight and very clear guidelines for interfering with information flows domestically (with continuous oversight by an independent review authority) and, secondly, to establish rather less tight guidelines on powers to interfere with information flows abroad, especially in various categories of crises. Certainly, effective EBS campaigning in periods of high tension or war would need sophisticated and highly refined means of interfering with the information flows reaching selected foreign leaders and others. Without such capabilities advanced democracies will be handicapped severely in future crises.

e. Highly Networked Military Capabilities

A nation's military forces are also critical to effective EBS campaigning – but they are only one of many instruments in the EBS arsenal. Their primary purpose would be to deliver a wide range of effects that would carry the capacity to encourage/persuade/coerce the opposing key decision-makers to change their position.

What distinguishes the requirements for military actions in EBS campaigns from those which have been routinely specified in the past? In peacetime, military presence, visit and exercise opportunities would, as now, be used to impress, build friendships, and to encourage key foreign personnel to seek close positive partnerships. An important, but generally subliminal message would be to encourage key foreign people to appreciate that in the military arena our forces were not to be underestimated or trifled with. However, within an EBS framework, these familiar operational modes would be more tightly tailored and tuned in order to communicate priority messages to key people.

In most crisis or conflict situations, the application of EBS would generally mean military operations with far greater precision, with greatly increased responsiveness and speed and, frequently, in much smaller packages. In many EBS campaigns, the military actions would comprise a series of rapidly-paced, but widely dispersed, special force operations combined with very precise and discrete air and sea attacks – sometimes against unusual symbolic targets. In all circumstances defence personnel would need to understand the delicate political environment in which they operate. Effectively, every soldier, sailor and airman would be a 'strategic corporal'. In other words, all Service personnel would need to be drilled in the knowledge that their individual actions could well have strategic consequences.

Despite the emphasis above on special operations in EBS campaigns, there would always be a need for the defence force to be able to revert to much more conventional operations at short notice. If negotiations falter or fail, or if the opposing decision-making elite responds in unexpected ways, it would be important to retain the capacity to escalate rapidly in order, for instance, to remove some of the opponent's more threatening capabilities or operational options. Hence, there would be an enduring need for highly-networked, high-mobility and very flexible military capabilities scaled at appropriate levels. What's more, for a country like Australia, there is likely to be no diminution in the desirability of such forces being highly interoperable with those of the country's close allies, particularly those of the United States.

f. Economic Warfare Capabilities

One distinguishing feature of EBS is the desirability of the higher command being able to marshal a very wide range of resources at short notice in order to deliver those effects likely to have greatest leverage on key individuals at critical times. Some of the more effective weapons in an EBS arsenal will be economic. In peacetime they may be relatively benign. However, in crises they may include the capacity to manipulate bank accounts (as with President Walter's in Hypothetical 1), to affect certain operations of stock exchanges, to influence certain commercial or trading issues, etc. These are not the sorts of instruments normally available to security planners, but in many circumstances they would be extremely valuable and means for their development would deserve some attention.

g. Whole-of-Nation Security Approach

In order for the national command authorities to have available the optimal range of effects in both peacetime circumstances and in future crises, most countries would need to find a way of moving beyond the 'stove-piped'

structures that usually separate foreign, defence, economic, industrial and other policies, and their respective policy-makers. Whilst the campaign against international terrorism is helping to break down *some* long-standing fiefdoms in the public policy community, much further progress will be required if national leaderships are to have available a wide range of fully-prepared campaign options. This will need changed mindsets, demanding and insistent national command authorities and, in Australia's case, almost certainly a small policy and planning staff to support the National Security Council in its efforts to develop a broad, flexible and highly-capable EBS arsenal.

## **Six Broader Characteristics of EBS**

In starting to draw this brief analysis of the potential of EBS to a conclusion, it is useful to underline briefly six of the concept's key characteristics:

- First, the primary focus of EBS is on influencing the behaviour of other parties, not on the nature of one's own actions. Friendly force actions are selected and employed only as a means to a political end, not as ends in themselves.
- EBS campaigns are structured from the outset to employ the best mix of cognitive, information and physical effects, using all available national (and, conceivably, allied) resources.
- EBS is heavily dependent on an exceptionally detailed and current knowledge of the opposing decision-making elite. However, it also requires a sophisticated understanding not only of the likely 'first tier' effects of various actions, but also of the probable cascading effects on others – opponents, neutrals and friendly parties.
- EBS is not only relevant to serious crises and war. Most elements can readily be employed in lesser circumstances as, for instance, during trade negotiations. The primary differences in these circumstances are the level of criticality of the issues at stake and the greatly reduced elements of the EBS arsenal that may be appropriate to employ.
- An important corollary is that many of the intelligence, planning and other core processes of EBS are best employed in a continuous manner. It would be highly desirable for the intelligence, planning and communications, command and control systems of an effective EBS to always be operating at a low tempo. A continuous strong focus on the key individuals in potentially hostile countries, and also on the key individuals in terrorist and other non-state groups of interest, would drive campaign planning and contingent preparations – and also periodic exercising – in highly effective ways.

## **The Potential Benefits of EBS**

In assessing the potential of effects-based strategy it is important not to overstate the prospective benefits of adopting such an approach. Nevertheless, there certainly would appear to be several plusses worthy of note. They include:

- By focusing all of the campaign effort directly on achieving the key political effects, EBS should, at least in theory, be more effective and efficient than more generalized campaign approaches. EBS campaigns are not just 'intelligence led' but 'knowledge led.'
- Because EBS generally entails the very precise application of force (and frequently no use of force at all), its generation of undesirable collateral effects should be far lower than most, if not all, other approaches.
- EBS offers greater prospects of early and effective outcomes because it provides a clear rationale for marshalling whole-of-nation resources – including elements of both 'soft' and 'hard' power – in order to maximize the prospects of achieving success.
- Because the potential costs of employing EBS are relatively low it could be used more frequently and at a much earlier stage of issue development than most other 'conventional' response options.
- If a national security system implemented and truly mastered EBS campaigning, it would be very difficult for other countries, or non-state actors such as terrorist groups, to counter.
- There are some societies that would appear better placed to adopt EBS than others. Those countries with high education standards, cultural and bureaucratic flexibility and serious security motivations would appear to be best placed. Arguably, Australia is one of the countries that is better placed to benefit from EBS, if it can muster the motivation to adapt its security systems sufficiently to permit processes of meaningful experimentation to get underway.

## **The Potential Problems of EBS**

Despite all of the positives mentioned in the discussion above, there are numerous real and potential difficulties posed by EBS. They include:

- The serious practical difficulties in developing and maintaining through a crisis the type of detailed understanding of the thinking of the opposing decision-making elite. Maintaining the sort of detailed reporting and even of retaining access to direct or indirect communication with the key people would be extremely difficult.

- An important part of an effective EBS approach would be the construction over time of a highly sophisticated, multi-layered, close to real-time intelligence gathering capability close to the centres of power in a number of other countries. Initiatives of this kind would entail the acceptance of many risks and would need to be considered with care.
- Modelling the mindsets and likely reactions of opposing leaders to various external events in advance would be fraught with difficulties. Nevertheless, whilst offering only partial accuracy, it is difficult to believe that, if treated appropriately, the insights such modelling would generate would not be worthwhile.
- Whilst accurate modelling of the 'first order' consequences of various actions in foreign countries would be difficult, it would be even more challenging to gauge the cascading second and third order effects. In other words, assessing, in advance, the likely effects of various campaign actions on other members of the elite, on the armed forces, the media and the broader community are likely to be even more problematic.
- The adoption of an EBS approach would require significant changes to mindsets, organizational structures, security investment priorities, personnel requirements, training and exercise priorities and many other things besides. Even were a concerted effort launched, the required adaptation could not be achieved rapidly and would inevitably be resisted by a range of structural fiefdoms and interest groups that might consider the adoption of EBS a challenge to their narrow interests.
- The potentially lower costs and risks of using EBS in most situations might encourage some national leaderships to over-use the covert mechanisms and neglect the more open negotiation and bargaining process options. This would be dangerous as although it might deliver short-term gains it would also risk longer-term distrust and even enmity.
- Several elements of an EBS would require actions at the fringes, or even beyond, the current bounds of legality. Areas of particular sensitivity include the possible manipulation of public information, interference with banking, financial and other international institutions and the threat and possible use of armed force in situations short of war. These apparent constraints would require early attention.

### **Is This Next-Generation Strategy?**

This discussion suggests that effects-based strategy does have the potential to refine significantly long-held approaches to national security campaign planning and operations. It is not so much that EBS offers a radical new approach, but rather, by exploiting a range of developments in the international environment it would appear to bring within closer reach some of the dreams of early strategic thinkers. In particular, by focusing in very

innovative ways on influencing the developing thinking of the opposing decision-makers, EBS promises, in ideal circumstances, far greater levels of campaign efficiency and effectiveness. Indeed, if a country could truly master such a strategic approach it would be exceptionally difficult to counter and could provide a new level of security for at least a generation.

However, EBS is not without its problems. In particular, many aspects would be extremely difficult to implement in practice. It is notable, however, that because of its multiple vertical (cognitive, information and physical) and horizontal (leadership, organic essentials, infrastructure, etc) layers, EBS offers numerous built-in workarounds. By its very nature, it generates multiple alternative means and modes of exerting the desired forms of influence. As with all forms of strategy, the real skill of EBS would be in selecting and applying the most appropriate mix of measures in the best sequences and timeframes.

For those who are inclined to be dismissive of EBS, it is worthwhile considering briefly the alternatives. Other approaches to campaign strategy would appear to offer no real advantages over EBS other than familiarity. They generally rely on less focussed intelligence, more coarse-grained knowledge of the opponent, fewer available options, less flexible systems and the frequent use of much blunter, less precise and more risky instruments. EBS has the great advantage of offering the *opportunity/possibility* of achieving highly-precise and carefully tailored effects, and very rapidly. Nevertheless, it does not eschew the options of using more traditional, coarse-grained and blunter types of force to secure key national objectives if the more finely-grained approaches fail.

Is EBS the shape of next-generation strategy? Does it offer a significant security edge for countries like Australia? Whilst the jury is currently out on these judgements, the case for looking more closely at this concept's potential is strong. There would, in consequence, seem to be merit in considering seriously how defence forces and other relevant national security agencies could commence a process of trialling some of its key elements.

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