



EFFECTS-BASED APPROACH: IS IT STILL VALID?

“the term effects-based is fundamentally flawed”

General James N. Mattis,
Commander, USJFCOM

In late 2008, the Commander US Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) reignited significant debate within the United States in declaring USJFCOM will no longer use, sponsor or export the terms and concepts related to effects based operations (EBO). This statement is the most definitive official public revocation of effects-based thinking. While his outright rejection indicates a fundamental change in current US joint thinking regarding EBO, the statement does not change Australia's embracing of the effects-based approach (EBA) to warfare. EBA simply provides a mechanism where one identifies desired and negative effects through the planning process. It provides a mechanism to map effects to the strategic level and thus ensures the overall campaign plan supports the Whole of Government (WOG) approach. EBA remains a critical component in realising multidimensional manoeuvre—the basic tenet of Australia's approach to warfare. Consequently, the air campaign planning process is based on EBA.

Effects-based thinking is not revolutionary. Throughout the history of warfare, commanders and strategists have tried to identify the adversary's centres of gravity and the most effective means to create optimum effects against them. Even in World War I Allied strategists were attempting to identify German industrial targets that would affect German military operations as an alternative to the trench warfare stalemate on the Western Front. Importantly, air power was the key capability to conduct such a campaign. Australian doctrine calls this, target systems analysis (TSA).

USJFCOM defines EBO as “a process for obtaining a desired strategic outcome or effect on the enemy through the synergistic and cumulative application of the full range of military and non-military capabilities at all levels of conflict.” EBO places considerable importance on identifying and quantifying specific effects resulting from specific actions against specific targets. This requires vast information on the adversary; an aspect that sometimes draws criticism. It has been suggested that EBO requires unattainable levels of knowledge.

Critics have also suggested that effects based concepts are not suited to irregular warfare and they have had limited success during recent counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many share General Mattis's view that EBO “... goes against the very nature of war”,



Precision guided munitions have enhanced air power's ability to generate effect in the battlespace

in that it is sometimes portrayed as having the ability to remove the friction and fog of war. As a result of these concerns, there has been greater support to recognise and adopt the broader philosophical aspects of effects based concepts. Both NATO and Australia have adopted this more flexible and practical approach in embracing an EBA as it provides a major link to WOG thinking. In this respect, it has significant

value in addressing broader national security concerns across the spectrum of conflict (i.e. transnational security, terrorism, peacekeeping). EBA can be as effective in developing a campaign plan against terrorists as a conventional adversary. EBA cannot remove the fog and friction of war, but it can be valuable in mitigating this friction by increasing our understanding of the adversary as a system.

A key component of EBA is systems analysis. Systems analysis is the process of mapping critical nodes and their relationships across related networks. For example, if you want to target an air defence system you would want to

not only identify the key nodes and their relationship to one another (i.e. radars, command and control, surface to air missiles, fighter aircraft) but also key enabler networks (i.e. telecommunications, power, leadership, and POL). There is also a need to map these networks against key cognitive domains including cultural, religious, political and economic. The subsequent holistic systems analysis enables one to identify direct and indirect effects, positive and negative outcomes and causal relationships.



Air power can greatly support a holistic effects based approach to complex security situations

Effects-based thinking is one of the strategic foundations for ensuring Australia's security. In the Australian context, EBA has been defined as *“the way of thinking and specific processes that, together, enable both the integration and effectiveness of the military contribution within a WOG approach and the realisation of strategic outcomes.”* EBA has direct benefits to multi-dimensional manoeuvre, the key principle in the Australian approach to war, and enables the ADF to operate within the adversary's decision cycle.

Although Australia has yet to develop formal EBA doctrine, EBA has been incorporated into Australian capstone and key functional doctrine. The *Future Joint Operating Concept (FJOC)* recognises that a national EBA underlies Australia's current approach to security and will be the basis for defence operations for the future. The *FJOC* identifies EBA, together with *seamless force* and *networked enabled operations*, as the key tenets that support multi-dimensional manoeuvre. Headquarters Joint Operations Command has integrated EBA into campaign planning. Unfortunately, systems analysis mechanisms have

not been effectively developed within Defence (such as the Australian intelligence community) and other government agencies to the extent required to support EBA. This will adversely impact the ADF's capacity to successfully implement an EBA.

The Air Force has incorporated an EBA into the *Air Power Manual (AAP1000)* and the *Operational Air Doctrine Manual (AAP 1002)*. Effects-based targeting is key to Air and Space Operations Centre (AOC) planning processes. EBA is critical to identifying and prioritising targets in accordance with the overall campaign plan. When properly implemented, EBA has demonstrated great success in making air campaign planning more effective and efficient (i.e. Gulf War air campaign).

EBA remains an important tenet for Australian and allied defence thinking. It is being integrated into ADF operational campaign planning and NATO doctrine, and given USJFCOM's amended position on effects based thinking, there may now be a need to reconcile the divergent perspectives on EBA within the allied community. Within Australia, consideration should be given to the development of a more holistic approach to EBA and articulation of a formal EBA doctrine. Lastly, Defence agencies need to provide greater support to the systems analysis process.

- *Effects-based targeting is a primary mechanism by which air power supports the national approach to warfare.*
- *Air power effects are generated by the AOC as a result of air campaign planning and are integrated within the overall joint campaign across the spectrum of conflict.*
- *Air power effects are synchronised with all national power elements to achieve national security outcomes.*

‘Good generals, admirals and statesmen have focused on using military forces to shape the behaviour of friends and foes for centuries.’

Edward Smith



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