A Campaign Approach To Deterrence

Focusing on short- and long-term operations, activities, and investments

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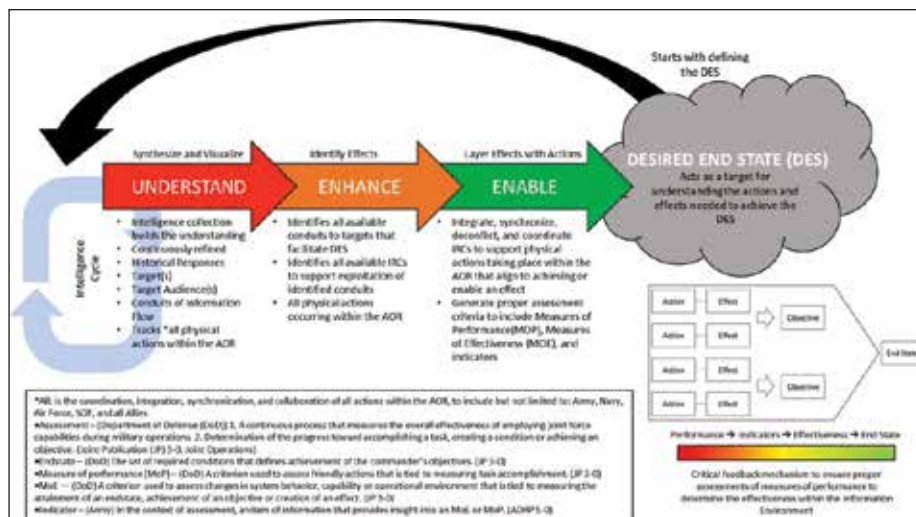
Generating assessments regarding the effectiveness of operations in the information environment (OIE) is a tricky endeavor. The Joint Force is challenged to establish desired end states or outcomes but at the same time is equally hamstrung in determining appropriate evaluation criteria for complex operational environments. Compounding this problem of determining mission intent, supported commanders often demand results faster than information warfare practitioners can measure the effectiveness of an action taken, which is further exacerbated by the difficulties inherent in synchronizing OIE across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational landscape. Absent a campaign plan approach, this quickly becomes a fool's errand.

To enable the MAGTF to compete and contribute to integrated deterrence, the MAGTF requires a comprehensive-framework approach to developing operations, activities, and investments (OAIs) in support of OIE. The framework requires long-term, consistent messaging tied to specific lines of effort which feature intermediate objectives on the road to an achievable end state. This article focuses on developing OAIs from a perspective of deterrence (though its themes could easily be applied to other end states) and proposes a framework to address the challenges just described.

The framework begins from the intelligence cycle and follows three steps: *understanding* the target audience's environment, *enhancing* situational awareness by linking information-related capabilities to desired end states, and then *enabling* mission success by conducting detailed planning for achieving and measuring effects. A model for the OAI planning framework is graphically portrayed in Figure 1.

As the image depicts, the OAI planning cycle is constant and begins with well-defined desired end states (DES). At its foundation, the intelligence process focuses on collecting and analyzing information relevant to achieving the DES and provides the foundation for the OAI planning process. Data about the operating environment, target audiences, and the flow of information within the environment are collected and processed into useful forms for planners. Intelligence then feeds into, and is used throughout, the OAI planning cycle:

Figure 1. OIE campaign-approach planning cycle. (Figure provided by authors.)

- First, planners utilize the intelligence output to build an *understanding* of the environment.
- Second, in the *enhance* phase, planners identify the information-related capabilities, which can be used to generate effects and begin to align them with available information conduits to reach intended target audiences within the environment.
- Third, after capabilities, resources, and target audiences have been identified, planners then move into the *enable* phase, where they conduct detailed planning to layer effects in support of OAI events. In addition, planners develop assessment criteria, including measures of performance, indicators, and measures of effectiveness, which provide a feedback mechanism for determining whether OAIs are accomplishing the DES.

Background

While the principle of incorporating assessments into the planning cycle is appropriate and well-intended, current assessment models are inadequate to provide meaningful feedback to support decision making for two reasons. First, assessment models focus on ill-defined, even arbitrary effects, which are often inadequate—as successful OIE reaches into the cognitive domain and cannot easily be measured without being able to observe accompanying behavioral changes. Second, assessment tools often focus only on measuring or detecting the short-term (sometimes a few weeks or less) reactions in environments where immediate impacts may not be visible but where measuring longer-term responses would be more fruitful.

Assessments as a doctrinal construct are not new; in the targeting realm, the concept of effects-based targeting—following a model which includes operational assessments—has been around for decades.[1] Current operational planning models incorporate assessment frameworks into the execution cycle, seeking to provide realtime feedback into the phases of operations, thereby giving commanders and planners quasi-empirical baselines upon which to adjust course as needed. Joint *Publication 3-13, Information Operations*, lays

Sgt Neta and Sgt Wallace with Psychological Operations Company, III MIG place messaging during a 31st MEU training evolution in 2022. (Photo by Maj Rob Boudreau.)

out an eight-step framework to support planning for assessments in the information environment.[2] To date, however, understanding *time* has proven to be the most critical factor in being able to properly track and layer effects from information-related capabilities to ensure a DES is produced within the environment. Additionally, the period over which these OAIs are conducted is often limited in duration from a couple of days to a couple of weeks, which restricts the observation window for determining whether the desired behavior/response for the specific target audience has been achieved. A deliberate effort needs to be made to better define the DES for a group of OAIs to allow for proper planning, layering, and synchronization of effects within a particular operational setting. This deliberate nesting of OAIs can enable meaningful assessments to be conducted to determine whether the actions taken (measures of performance), contributed to the desired actions/inactions from the target (measures of effectiveness), and ultimately demonstrate whether a mission has been successful. This effort is supported by collection efforts with clearly established indicators to facilitate the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to determine whether DES were achieved.

Addressing the Problem

OAIs must be understood in the context of the long game.

A campaign, as defined in doctrine, is "a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space."[3] OAIs are often viewed as a singular event, instead of as events nested within a larger campaign plan. Most events are limited in duration, typically lasting from a couple of days to a couple of weeks. Frequently, leaders ask for an immediate assessment of the effects that were generated from an action or event to better understand the effectiveness of an OAI. However, in order to generate long-term effects from singular events within an OAI, they need to be nested and consistently executed as a coherent chain of events that can last months or even years. These authors would submit that the probability of accurately connecting assessments to an ultimate determination of causation increases as new events are compared and contrasted with previously executed events and outcomes; that is, by distilling elements common to each event set and analyzing

them in relation to the desired associated outcomes over time, assessors receive a more complete picture and are better able to assess the overall effectiveness of an OAI. But planners and tacticians must remain flexible from event to event; as performance measures are collected and intermediate outcomes start to take shape, planners should adjust course as needed to keep the OAI aligned with the lines of effort supporting the DES. *OAIs must be coordinated, integrated, and synchronized across the IE.*

MCDP 1-2 reminds us that "[t]he conduct of a successful campaign requires the integration of many disparate efforts. Effective action in any single warfighting function is rarely decisive in and of itself."[4] But higher command echelons regularly fail to integrate like operations that could be tied together to create broader effects within an operational area. Make no mistake: it is the combatant commander's responsibility to implement a national strategy, which "is always joint in nature."[5] Anecdotal experience shows numerous occasions where coincidental actions have occurred between different entities of the DOD or interagency that in turn created the perception that they were coordinated, integrated, and synchronized actions.[6] This serendipitous perception resulted in desired effects and reactions from the intended target audiences but was merely a coincidence. Further confusing the issue, certain entities sold this as a successful operation but did not address the failure between organizations to address the underlying issue: that no one was tracking the actions others were taking in the environment. Higher echelons (i.e. the combatant commands) need to better track and understand all of the actions taking place within an operational environment, to identify activities that can be connected to produce desired effects within the information environment.

While the onus is on combatant commands to ensure integration, subordinate units also carry their share of responsibility to ensure coordination with higher, adjacent, and subordinate units. From tacticians on the ground up to the Service component commands, synchronization of effects both horizon-

tally and vertically is key to achieving desired end states. To provide the most flexibility and limit bureaucratic inefficiencies, the use of liaisons, responsible for linking the OAI action element with the points of contact of another OAI, could be leveraged to support coordination while limiting interference with the primary mission of each OAI being conducted. This integration between separate organizations is optional, but shared understanding is gained by knowing all the actions taking place within the operational area, thus enabling coordination, de-confliction of effects, and integration for greater success. This effort ensures the economy of force and allows for joint-level effects to be generated. *Objectives must be clearly delineated to avoid creating competing effects.*

> *Higher echelons ... need to better track and understand all of the actions taking place within an operational environment ...*

In the quest for obtaining quick assessments, objectives often become conflated, which can create unintended effects that compete with or undermine each other. By way of example, leaders regularly try to encapsulate or shape the desired effects of an OAI by tying it to both deterring a target audience (not quickly assessed) and generating a response from the target audience (more rapidly assessed). While both objectives can be accomplished, understanding that the two effects are not necessarily synonymous and can sometimes even conflict is critical to shaping the actions taken. If not properly defined and planned, the resulting actions can quickly turn from that of deterrence to aggression, thus having counter-productive effects.

In general, "[d]eterrence is the practice of discouraging or restraining someone—in world politics, usually a nation-state—from taking unwanted actions, such as an armed attack."[7] *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Planning,* provides guidance as to how flexible

deterrent options and flexible response options may be "scale[d] up (escalate[d]) or de-escalate[d] based on continuous assessment of an adversary's actions and reaction."[8] Among other considerations, "risk analysis should be an inherent step in determining which flexible deterrent options to use and how and when that flexible deterrent options should be used."[9] The fine line that separates deterrence and compellence—and consequent perceptions of aggression—pinpoints the need for deliberate planning to clearly define the intended effects and desired responses to actions taken by friendly forces across all domains; to analyze the risks of target audiences perceiving that actions have crossed the line from deterrence to aggression, and to develop assessment criteria which will

facilitate de-escalation or other OAI shifts based on intermediate responses.[10] Figure 2 (on following page) depicts how an OAI campaign incorporates joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational perspectives, and then applies the OAI campaign cycle—with feedback and assessment through every OAI and event—to achieve deterrence. *OAI effects must account for realistic time horizons.*

In OAI planning, three separate time windows must be accounted for in determining intended effects: actions taken when leading up to an OAI, actions taken in support of the OAI, and actions taken post-OAI. Detailed planning should also account for the total duration over which all these windows occur (short- versus long-term).

To validate an assessment plan, OAI planners must incorporate realistic time expectations for effects to be measured. Expecting effects to be easily measured (or even measurable) over a two-week or two-month period may not be realistic when measuring long-term effects such
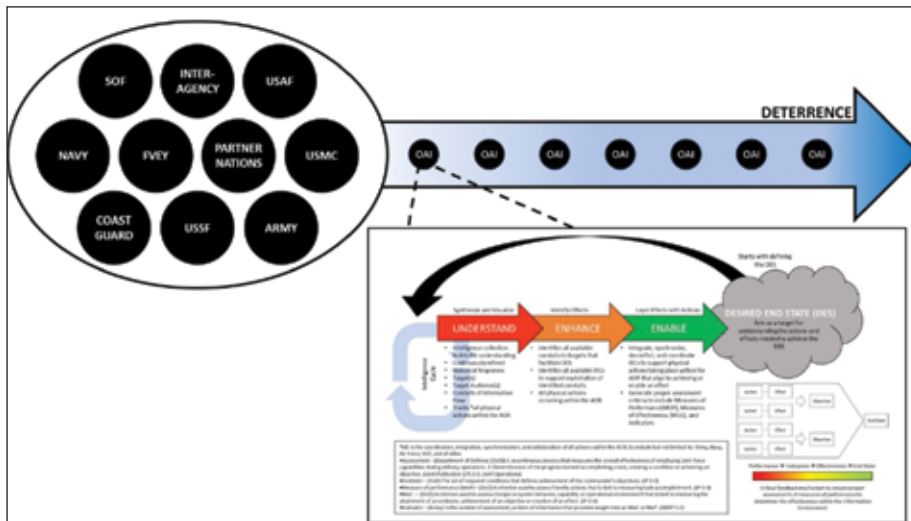
Figure 2. OAI development to achieve deterrence. *(Figure provided by authors.)*

and interagency are tracked, coordinated, deconflicted, and integrated to ensure positive progression of intended effects across the area of responsibility. To measure this progression and to be useful, assessment criteria must be precisely defined to ensure that planned end states are being met. Using easily measurable criteria may give quick feedback, but it does not reflect cognitive shifts, which lie at the heart of OIE. Lastly, unless realistic time periods are incorporated into planning for assessments, results will be difficult to pair with end states and effectiveness will never be fully understood.

as deterrence or assurance of partners and allies.

At present, assessment criteria are developed to be collected and analyzed immediately (within days or less), rather than over a period of time where real systemic effectiveness can be determined. This myopic view of assessments leads planners to select weak criteria (e.g., location, target audience, and any reaction or response), which may be easy to identify but typically provide no meaningful feedback to commanders.

Recommended Improvements

Deliberate planning efforts need to nest OAIs and events over time to generate long-term effects within a target audience. By nesting multiple OAIs, and the individual events executed within the OAIs, planners can develop long-term assessment criteria to better track measures of performance, indicators, and measures of effectiveness. This will allow for reinforced messaging over time instead of within each short-duration OAI. Higher echelons need to ensure OAIs across the DOD partners, allies,

Notes

1. For example, see BGen David A. Deptula, "Effects-Based Operations: Change in the Nature of Warfare," (Arlington: Aerospace Education Foundation, 2001), in which he parsed the distinction between a destruction-based targeting approach (destroying an enemy through annihilation or attrition), and an effects-based approach (rendering an enemy force useless by defeating systems of control).

2. Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 3-13, Information Operations* (Washington, DC: November 2012).

3. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1-2, Campaigning* (Washington, DC: August 1997).

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Specific instances are not discussed herein due to the venue.

7. Michael J. Mazzar, *Understanding Deterrence* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2018).

8. Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 5-0, Joint Planning,* (Washington, DC: December 2020).

9. Ibid.

10. Whereas deterrence is focused on getting an actor to stop or prevent an action, "compellence" is "an effort to *force* an actor to do something." *See Understanding Deterrence.*

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Maj Boudreau, Civil Affairs planner for the 31st MEU, conducts liaison with a Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force officer during Patrol 22.1. *(Photo credit: unknown, collection of Maj Rob Boudreau.)*