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THESIS

ATTRIBUTION IN INFLUENCE: RELATIVE POWER AND THE USE OF ATTRIBUTION

by

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   The types of attribution for influence activities span a spectrum that includes true attribution, non-attribution, concurring partner attribution, and false attribution. The U.S. Department of Defense sits in a unique position among U.S. agencies, as it must remain capable of conducting influence activities across that spectrum. This includes activities such as public affairs, military information support operations, and military deception. While U.S. military doctrine clearly defines and delineates the various types of attribution for influence activities and messages, notably absent is when and how attribution should be used. There is also little scholarly literature that specifically explores the issue of attribution. Despite this dearth of information, an analysis of historical cases can help identify the conditions best suited for the various types of attribution. This thesis explores those cases and identifies relative power as a potential variable to determine attribution. It tests the hypothesis that false and non-attribution methods are most effective when in a relatively weak position, and as operational success and relative power are achieved, influence activities with true attribution become more effective.

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ABSTRACT

The types of attribution for influence activities span a spectrum that includes true attribution, non-attribution, concurring partner attribution, and false attribution. The U.S. Department of Defense sits in a unique position among U.S. agencies, as it must remain capable of conducting influence activities across that spectrum. This includes activities such as public affairs, military information support operations, and military deception. While U.S. military doctrine clearly defines and delineates the various types of attribution for influence activities and messages, notably absent is when and how attribution should be used. There is also little scholarly literature that specifically explores the issue of attribution. Despite this dearth of information, an analysis of historical cases can help identify the conditions best suited for the various types of attribution. This thesis explores those cases and identifies relative power as a potential variable to determine attribution. It tests the hypothesis that false and non-attribution methods are most effective when in a relatively weak position, and as operational success and relative power are achieved, influence activities with true attribution become more effective.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COI	Office of the Coordinator of Information
DOD	Department of Defense
EU	European Union
FIS	Foreign Information Service
HN	host nation
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JUSPAO	Joint United States Public Affairs Office
MACV	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
MACV-SOG	Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group
MILDEC	military deception
MISO	military information support operations
MO	Morale Operations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
PN	partner nation
PWB	Psychological Warfare Branch
PWD	Psychological Warfare Division
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force
SO	Special Operations
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIA	United States Information Agency
VOA	Voice of America

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I. AN EXAMINATION OF ATTRIBUTION IN INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES

A. FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Any government attempting to further its foreign policy goals through influence activities must decide what type of attribution is best suited for those activities. This attribution can span a spectrum from true attribution to false attribution, and include a combination of truth and lies. In support of a particular foreign policy goal, these influence operations will also likely involve multiple messages that can fall across this spectrum of attribution, and the right combination and timing of those types of attribution may be critical for success of the message, and ultimately achieving the objective.

The U.S. government faces this same problem when attempting to message in support of its policy goals and has departments and agencies that specialize in messaging using various types of attribution. While agencies such as the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency do not exclusively use one form of attribution over another, they do typically specialize and focus their operations on one end or another of that spectrum. In contrast, the Department of Defense (DOD) must remain capable of operating across the full spectrum of attribution. The DOD must be equally capable of conducting Public Affairs (PA), Military Information Support Operations (MISO), and Military Deception Operations (MILDEC) to meet its military objectives, using true-attribution, partner attribution, non-attributed, and false attribution depending on the operational conditions. This puts the DOD in a unique position within the U.S. government as it must be adept at all types of attribution, and more importantly, understand under what conditions and to what degree to use each. Besides defining some of the terms themselves, there is currently little information in U.S. military doctrine to guide the use of attribution.

Since the Second World War, the U.S. Department of Defense—and equivalent organizations in other countries—have been tasked with conducting operations to influence foreign target audiences. These operations provide relevant case studies that can be examined to determine when, how, and why attribution was handled and how

effective those operations were in achieving their objectives, ideally identifying how attribution effected that success or failure. Though the examples range over 75 years of technological change—primarily advancing the means of dissemination—the fundamentals of the influence activities and the strategies employed to influence an audience are still relevant.

B.   RESEARCH QUESTION

What conditions should inform the type of attribution chosen in U.S. influence activities?

C.   LITERATURE REVIEW AND RELATED WORK

Despite an extensive amount of literature on the subject of Psychological Operations, there is very little that specifically discusses the conditions for assigning its use. Many Psychological Operations case studies exist, usually published following a major U.S. conflict. These include Paul M. A. Linebarger's *Psychological Warfare*, published in 1948; William E. Daugherty and Morris Janowitz's *A Psychological Warfare Casebook*, published in 1958; the Department of the Army's *The Art and Science of Psychological Operations: Case Studies of Military Application*, published in 1978; and Frank L. Goldstein and Benjamin F. Findley, Jr.'s *Psychological Operations: Principles and Case Studies*, published in 1996. While each of these books defines the types of attribution and discusses their use in operations, they do not explore what conditions are best suited for the various types of attribution.

There are a few limited exceptions within this collection of literature. Linebarger names five elements for consideration in propaganda and identifies the first and most important as "source." The source can either be open and acknowledged or fake. Open and acknowledged propaganda is "putting the propaganda on the record before the world," while fake propaganda "cannot readily be traced back."[1] Importantly, he notes

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[1] Paul M. A. Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare* (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 44.

that "an open source usually (but not always) implies belief of the disseminator in the veracity of his materials."[2]

In Frank L. Goldstein and Daniel W. Jacobowitz's "Psychological Operations: An Introduction," the authors discuss attribution in terms of overt and covert and their relationship to using truth and lies in messaging. They describe how overt propaganda may be either true or false, but credibly of an overt source can be quickly diminished when using falsehoods. Goldstein, Jacobowitz, and many other authors also discuss attribution in terms of white, grey, and black. White propaganda is disseminated by a source that takes responsibility, grey propaganda is produced and disseminated from an unknown source, and black propaganda is purported to have emanated from somewhere other than its true source. Goldstein and Jacobowitz further describe black propaganda's use in damaging the credibility of a truthful source by disseminating obvious falsehoods. If effective though, it quickly loses its credibility unless the target audience is particularly susceptible to this manipulation.[3]

U.S. military doctrine is similarly lacking in discussion and guidance on the use of attribution. The joint publication for MISO, JP 3-13.2, defines the different forms of attribution as immediate, delayed, or non-attributed.[4] Further definition is provided in the *Military Information Support Operations Supplement to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan* (CJCSI 3110.05E), adding the concept of concurring partner nation or organization attribution. While these joint documents provide clarification on the delineation between types of attribution, little is discussed on when, how, or why these various types of attribution should be used. The only guidance for the use of attribution in these joint publications is when the CJCSI states that "In general, MISO products and activities should be attributed to the United States or a concurring partner nation (PN)."[5] The U.S.

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[2] Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 44.

[3] Frank L. Goldstein and Daniel W. Jacobowitz, "Psychological Operations: An Introduction," in *Psychological Operations: Principles and Case Studies*, ed. Frank L Goldstein and Benjamin F. Findley, Jr. (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1996), 5–6.

[4] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Information Support Operations*, JP-3-12.2 (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2014), V-3.

[5] Department of Defense, *Military Information Support Operations Supplement to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan*, CJCSI 3110.05E (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2011), C-1.

Army's field manual for MISO (FM 3-53) expands on the joint definitions and actually includes a short statement for considering attribution, stating:

> A number of factors are taken into consideration to determine the appropriate stance on revealing the source of USG information activities, whether emanating from the CCDR [Combatant Commander] or COM PAO [Combatant Command Public Affairs Officer], or the supporting MISO units. These factors could include the type of operation, the supported agency's policies, the need to control USG exposure, and personnel protection and security considerations.[6]

With the exception of this statement and the previously mentioned line in the CJCSI, there is a notable absence in doctrine of discussion on when and how attribution should be applied to achieve the desired objective. There is no information or guidance on how to effectively balance the risks of exposure with achieving the desired effect, or what conditions are best suited for the various types of attribution. Despite this lack of guidance, and little academic writing that discusses the topic of attribution specifically, there are many historical examples that demonstrate the use of the types of attribution to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic objectives. These examples may guide future decisions and serve as models for when and how attribution should be claimed.

The very earliest influence campaigns carried out by the DOD grappled with the issue of attribution. Early in World War II, the U.S. psychological warfare effort was split between two agencies, the Office of War information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OWI was responsible for "white" propaganda—propaganda that was clearly attributed to the United States—and the OSS, specifically the Morale Operations (MO) branch, was primarily responsible for "black" propaganda—propaganda that falsely attributed its source. The split had a functional purpose that was fundamentally about the pros and cons of attribution and the use of true and false information. It was argued by the head of the OWI that America's image and prestige would suffer if the United States used deceitful methods in its messaging.[7] For this reason, the psychological

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[6] Department of the Army, *Military Information Support Operations*, FM 3-53 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), 2-4.

[7] Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 228–229.

warfare conducted by the OSS against the Axis powers primarily fell in the category of black propaganda though it was most effective when synchronized with the OWI and its white propaganda effort.[8]

Many of the concepts behind psychological warfare continued in the Korean War despite the disbanding and reorganization of most of the agencies and units that conducted such operations. Messages disseminated in support of psychological warfare during the Korean War were almost exclusively overt in nature and attributed to the United Nations forces. A major function of psychological warfare in Korea was to induce surrender, and leaflet drops and loudspeaker and radio broadcasts were used to exploit the terrible battlefield conditions and entice the enemy to surrender.[9] Because of the focus on surrender, attribution would have to remain true to facilitate a successful surrender and convince an enemy that the promises made as a condition for surrender would be fulfilled.

The focus on surrender continued into Vietnam but also included the concept of winning hearts and minds. This usually necessitated the claiming of attribution by U.S. forces. The Joint United States Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO)—an effort involving many U.S. government entities that included the U.S. military and the U.S. Information Agency—conducted mostly truly attributed and truthful messaging targeting the people of South Vietnam.[10] In contrast, extensive influence operations were conducted using non-attribution and false information by the psychological operations elements of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observations Group (MACVSOG).[11]

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[8] Anthony Cave Brown, ed., *The Secret War Report of the OSS* (New York: Berkley Medallion Books, 1976), 107.

[9] Stehpen E. Pease, *PSYWAR: Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950–1953* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992), 17–18.

[10] Robert J. Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

[11] Richard Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi: Kennedy and Johnson's Use of Spies, Saboteurs, and Covert Warriors in North Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 112.

D.   HYPOTHESES

After an initial assessment of the literature and relevant cases, we believe there may be a correlation between relative power and the type of attribution used in messaging. From this assessment, we developed two hypotheses to examine this correlation between attribution and relative power, and these hypotheses are examined using the methodology below. For the purpose of this thesis, one actor in a conflict is determined to have relative power over the other. Relative power can be derived from a variety of factors that are dependent on the circumstances of the conflict. This will be discussed further in a later section.

The hypotheses are as follows:

1.   False attribution and non-attribution influence activities are most beneficial when in a position of relative weakness.

2.   True attribution and attribution through a concurring partner force are more beneficial as operational success and a relative power advantage are achieved.

E.   METHODOLOGY

To answer the research question and examine the hypotheses, this thesis analyzes and compares several relevant cases from World War II to the present day, and focuses on operations to influence target audiences in support of operational and strategic objectives. These case studies include examples where the operations used various types of attribution and combinations of truth and lies for the disseminated messages. From the analysis and comparison of the cases we believe that guidance can be develop to optimize operational success by utilizing the proper type of attribution for a set of conditions, and can then be applied to current and future operations.

The case studies include some foreign operations, but are largely focused on U.S. operations in order to accurately compare the assessment of risk when deciding message attribution. Different countries and organizations have different assessments of the risks and rewards associated with message attribution due to political and cultural factors that

cannot be applied in U.S. operations. Therefore, these differing perceptions of risk are considered and weighed when assessing attribution and its contribution to meeting operational objectives.

To analyze the case studies, we developed a template for analysis to guide our assessment and to test our hypotheses. The template is as follows:

(1)   Background

This is a brief overview of the conflict and actors involved. It explores the military and political situation and their impact on the conflict.

(2)   Relative power

This is an assessment of the relative power of each actor and includes aspects of power relevant to the conflict. Given the conflict and actors involved, we assess which aspects of power were most relevant to the conflict and determine which actor had the relative advantage. We also assess if and how these factors, and thus the relative power, changed as the conflict progressed.

(3)   Messaging conducted and attribution

This section identifies the operations and forms of messaging used during the case and what type of attribution was used in each circumstance. The major characteristics of the operation are analyzed to include the objectives, target audience, desired behavior change, forms of dissemination, and measures of effectiveness used by each side, if available. We also analyze how attribution was used in different influence activities and how it may or may not have contributed to achieving the desired objective.

(4)   Outcomes

This section analyzes the success of the operations and the role attribution may or may not have played in that outcome. We measure success by the effect that messaging had on achieving its stated objectives, whether they be military or political. We also assess the effect of that messaging on the larger operational and strategic objectives. If

poor unit performance was a factor in the failure of an operation, as opposed to the content or attribution in the operation, that is accounted for in this section.

(5)   Conclusions

This section compares the use of attribution to the relative power of the actors. We also assess if attribution changed as relative power shifted during the conflict and if that change in attribution impacted a message's effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

F.   TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS IN LITERATURE

Attribution is defined multiple ways throughout the literature on psychological operations. This section reviews some of those definitions and establishes definitions to be used throughout the remainder of this thesis.

The activity within the DOD that regularly utilizes multiple forms of attribution is MISO. The doctrine for attribution of MISO products and activities is defined and discussed in several U.S. joint and Army publications. The joint publication for MISO, JP 3-13.2, defines the different forms of attribution as immediate, delayed, or non-attributed.[12] Further definition is provided in the *Military Information Support Operations Supplement to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan* (CJCSI 3110.05E), and it adds the concept of concurring partner nation or organization attribution. According to these joint publications, U.S. attribution openly acknowledges U.S. involvement in the content or is presented in such a way that is should be obvious that the United States is the source. The CJCSI defines concurring partner nation (PN) or organization attribution as "MISO products and activities developed by the DOD in support of a concurring PN or non-commercial organizations (such as international or non-governmental organizations)."[13] Delayed attribution is defined as attribution that "allows for disclosure after the actual dissemination of information has taken place, within a reasonable period

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[12] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Military Information Support Operations*, V-3.

[13] Department of Defense, *Military Information Support Operations Supplement to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan*, C-1.

of time."[14] Non-attribution is defined as "the conduct of MISO for which there is no intention ever to attribute the activity."[15]

The U.S. Army's field manual for MISO (FM 3-53) expands on these joint definitions and similarly delineates the types of attribution as immediate attribution, delayed attribution, host nation (HN), PN or organizational attribution, and non-attribution. It defines immediate attribution as attribution that "openly acknowledges U.S. involvement in information activities."[16] It qualifies this definition with examples, such as products that are directly disseminated by U.S. personnel or equipment, or bearing U.S. government symbols. Delayed attribution allows for the dissemination of MISO without clear attribution in order to protect the security of operations, participants, or if immediate attribution is not appropriate. In this case, attribution can be withheld until it is operationally feasible to acknowledge U.S. attribution. Concurring HN and PN attribution allows for U.S. developed MISO products to be attributed to a concurring third party. The definition provides examples that include security assistance, foreign internal defense, and counter insurgency. The final type of attribution defined in this doctrine is non-attribution. This type of attribution is defined as "instances when there is no intention to ever acknowledge the source of the message or action."[17] Notably absent from the doctrine is any definition or discussion of a type of attribution that falsely attributes a message to an adversary or unwitting individual or organization.

Other literature on psychological operations provides alternative delineation and definition on the types of attribution. Linebarger categorizes the source of propaganda as two types. The first is *overt propaganda*, which he also identifies as *white propaganda*, and "is issued from an acknowledged source, usually a government or an agency of a government, including military command at various levels."[18] The second is *covert*

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[14] Department of Defense, *Military Information Support Operations Supplement to the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan*, C-1.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Department of the Army, *Military Information Support Operations*, 2-5.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 44.

propaganda, which he also identifies as *black propaganda*, and "has no ostensible source other than the real source and normally involve utterances or acts which are unlawful under the domestic law of the attacked area."[19]

Goldstein and Jacobowitz's definitions of white, grey, and black psychological operations reflect a description echoed in more modern literature. They define white propaganda as synonymous with overt, where the "source takes responsibility for it."[20] Grey propaganda is defined as "material that is distributed without an identified source," and black propaganda is "material produced by one source that purports to have emanated from another source."[21]

G.   THESIS TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

To clarify terms discussed in literature spanning 70 years and multiple conflicts, the following definitions are used throughout this thesis. These definitions most closely resemble U.S. doctrinal definitions, with the exception of false attribution, which does not exist in the current doctrine. For this definition, we rely on other literature that discusses this form of attribution, often referred to as black or covert psychological operations.

1. True attribution: openly acknowledges the government or organization involved in the influence activity.

2. Partner attribution: influence activities are attributed to a concurring partner force.

3. Non-attribution: a government or organization's role in an influence activity is not intended to be apparent or acknowledged publicly.

4. False attribution: the influence activity is purported to be from a source other than its true source.

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[19] Linebarger, *Psychological Warfare*, 44.

[20] Goldstein and Jacobowitz, *Psychological Operations*, 5.

[21] Ibid., 6.

H. RELATIVE POWER

There are many aspects of power, and assessing the power of a one force over another is a difficult task, but necessary if we are to assess its relationship to attribution in influence activities. Throughout this thesis we generally assess "relative power" as opposed to "absolute power," a significant but appropriate distinction in this context. As Hans Morgenthau makes clear in *Politics among Nations: The struggle for Power and Peace*, a common error in evaluating power is to "neglect the relative character of power and to deal instead with the power of a nation as though it were an absolute."[22] Using relative power as the measure in these cases allows us to focus on assessing the specific conditions and elements of power relevant to the scope and type of conflict. For this reason, we assess the power of each actor only as it is relevant to the case.

To assess the relative power of the actors we consider a selection of factors that can be used to measure power. Given the diversity of the cases, not all factors will be influential in determining relative power in each case. The initial factors for consideration in a relative power assessment are the instruments of national power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. U.S. joint doctrine details these factors as they relate to the range of military operations.[23] Morgenthau also identifies additional factors for consideration, some falling within the scope of the instruments of national power, but worth mentioning in detail. These include geography, natural resource, industrial capacity, population, national character, and national morale.[24] This is not an exclusive list, but provides a basis for assessing the relative power of the diverse actors in each case.

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[22] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1973), 154.

[23] Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, JP-1 (Joint Chiefs of Staff: 2013), I-11 – I-14.

[24] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 112–148.

I.   THESIS SCOPE

Three case studies were selected to investigate our hypotheses. These case studies were selected because they offer a diverse set of conflicts involving the United States or another major nation state, in this case Russia, where there was: 1) a clear use of influence messaging; 2) a shift in relative power throughout the conflict; and 3) operations that were primarily executed by military organizations.

Also of note, deception operations are not discussed in these case studies. Deception operations are comprised of two elements—dissimulation and simulation. Dissimulation hides the real and simulation shows the false, and while simulation consists of lies, it is inherently overt.[25] The simulation's true source must be clear to the target audience for the desired misperception to take hold. For this reason, deception operations are almost always conducted with true attribution, and are therefore outside of this discussion.

The first case study analyzes the operations of the Morale Operations branch within the OSS during World War II and how those operations compared to the Psychological Warfare Branch and the Office of War Information operating during the same period. Though the MO branch of the OSS was primarily concerned with "black" propaganda—propaganda with false attribution and often false information—its activities can be compared to other allied influence organizations that dealt primarily in "white" or "grey" propaganda that used true attribution. Despite differing types of attribution, all of these organization, and especially the OSS and Psychological Warfare Branch, supported U.S. military objectives that can be identified and assessed.

The second case study looks at several operations by U.S. Psychological Operations forces during the Vietnam War, both by special operations and conventional forces. The true attribution products traditionally distributed by the JUSPAO greatly contrasted with the false or non-attribution operations that were conducted by MACVSOG. This case also provides several organizations that used varying forms of

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[25] Hy Rothstein and Barton Whaley, eds., *The Art and Science of Military Deception* (Boston: Artech House, 2013), 19–20.

attribution in support of military objectives during the same conflict. U.S. forces were also working in close conjunction with concurring partner forces in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

The final case study assesses Russian use of attribution in messaging during their coordinated effort to annex Crimea and support separatists in Ukraine. In this case, the Russians began their operations without clearly attributing any of their actions, to include messaging products, to themselves and slowly changed that attribution as the operation progressed.[26] This case addresses the research question from a non-U.S. perspective and includes operations by both a military acting independently and through a partner force.

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[26] John R. Haines, "How, Why, and When Russia Will Deploy Little Green Men – and Why the U.S. Cannot," Foreign Policy Research Institute, March 9, 2016, http://www.fpri.org/article/2016/03/how-why-and-when-russia-will-deploy-little-green-men-and-why-the-us-cannot/.

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II. U.S. PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IN WORLD WAR II

At the outset of WWII, the United States and its allies faced one of the greatest propaganda machines in the history of war. Joseph Goebbels and the Nazi party wielded propaganda as effectively as any other weapon in the German arsenal and the United States was woefully ill prepared to respond in kind. In an attempt to combat this problem—both domestically and internationally—the United States created several independent agencies and military organizations to conduct psychological warfare. These took several forms and many different names in the early years of the war, but ultimately the U.S. psychological warfare effort was undertaken primarily by three organizations: the Office of War Information's (OWI) Overseas Branch, the Office of Strategic Services' (OSS) Morale Operations (MO) Branch, and the Army's Psychological Warfare Division (PWD).[27] Among these organizations, psychological warfare was conducted from the tactical to strategic levels of war and disseminated using every means available at the time. While no organization exclusively used one form of attribution over another, the OWI and PWD focused on true-attribution activities while the OSS MO Branch focused on false and non-attribution.

While these organizations and their activities were conducted around the world in both the Pacific and European theaters of war, we will focus on the European theater in this case study. This will allow for a better assessment of relative power and its shift throughout the war, as well as the coordination of relevant operations.

A. BACKGROUND

1. Office of the Coordinator of Information

The United States had never before conducted psychological warfare on the scale required for a world war and it was quickly realized that such operations required a special set of skills and a mindset that was not readily present, especially within the Department of Defense. Fortunately, an influential Army Colonel named William "Wild

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[27] Stanley Sandler, *"Cease Resistance: It's Good for You!": A History of U.S. Army Combat Psychological Operations*, 2nd ed. (MacDill AFB, FL: USSOCOM, 1999), 45–46.

Bill" Donovan had new ideas on the role of psychological warfare and how it should be conducted against the Axis powers. Ultimately, those ideas and his influence would come to form the Office of the Coordinator of information (COI), and eventually the OWI and the OSS and its MO Branch.

At the outbreak of WWII, the U.S. psychological warfare effort was led by the COI, formally established on 11 July 1941. It was primarily the creation of Colonel William "Wild Bill" Donovan, at the direction of President Roosevelt, and focused on both intelligence and psychological warfare, two things that Donovan saw as essentially linked.[28] Donovan always had propaganda in mind when developing his concepts for the COI and OSS, even if politically and bureaucratically it was the most controversial aspect of those organizations. The desire for a larger and more centralized intelligence agency was also driven by its requirement for effective propaganda. Donovan's emphasis on this was very clear in a speech given on 12 December 1942 in New York, approximately 6 months after COI had been reorganized into the OWI and OSS. He stated:

> In this war of machines, the human element is, in the long run, more important than the machines themselves. There must be the will to make the machines, to man the machines, and to pull the trigger. Psychological warfare is directed against that will. Its object is to destroy the morale of the enemy and to support the morale of our allies within the enemy and enemy occupied countries. One instrument is propaganda. This has more powerful instruments than ever before.[29]

Donovan goes on to discuss the importance of having the right kind of intelligence in fighting "that kind of war," and the unique types of intelligence required.[30] Donovan was realizing that WWII was a war of mobilization and production, of national movements that required a massive will from not only the soldiers fighting but the people supporting them. He also saw the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda which the Allies were struggling to match early in the war.

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[28] At the time, the definition of psychological warfare was much broader then it is in modern times, and in addition to propaganda included such things as subversion, sabotage, and support to guerrilla actions.

[29] William J. Donovan, "Psychological Warfare" (speech, New York, December 12, 1942), Wikipedia, accessed June, 10 2017, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Donovan_on_PW.pdf.

[30] Ibid.

Despite some initial operational success, the COI was marred with controversy, particularly in the area of foreign propaganda which was run by a branch known as the Foreign Information Service (FIS). The COI continued to meet resistance as it ran up against similar efforts in other agencies and organizations, including the newly formed Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Central to this controversy was the role of the FIS and propaganda, to the point that it almost caused the dismemberment of the most essential elements of the organization, and the resignation of Donovan. Ultimately, the decision came to President Roosevelt who would choose a middle ground that saw the U.S. propaganda effort split between two agencies; the OSS, which would fall under the JCS; and the OWI, which now included the FIS and remained primarily a civilian organization.[31]

2. The OSS Morale Operations Branch

The MO Branch was officially established on 3 January 1943, but due to the political battles being fought between the OWI, the JCS, and the OSS, the JCS directive for the OSS underwent several revisions, none of which gave clear authority for propaganda. It was not until 27 October 1943 that a final version of the basic directive to the OSS provided authority for MO Branch's activities. The MO Branch was eventually tasked with conducting "black" propaganda to undermine the enemy's will to fight while remaining subversive and covert in its execution—primarily false attribution activities— and would ultimately become a unique component of the overall psychological warfare effort. But, due to this early ambiguity and uncertainty, many resources, most importantly its budget, was continually called into question. This slow start concerned the OSS Executive Committee enough that they tasked its Planning Group to develop a report on the issue.[32] The report cites several reasons, including the problem mentioned above—a "confusion as to its objectives and functions."[33] It also cites a contention with the Special

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[31] Richard Dunlop, *Donovan: America's Master Spy* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1982), 383–387.

[32] Kermit Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services)* (New York: Walker and Company, 1976), 212–215.

[33] Ibid., 215.

Operations (SO) Branch who thought MO should not have its own agents.[34] This reflected a general lack of trust in the MO Branch and their ability to operate in occupied areas. Other reasons for MO's slow start included a departure of the MO Branch Chief before organization was complete, failures in recruitment, and a "lack of recognition of the tremendous possibilities of MO as a major weapon in psychological warfare."[35]

Despite these setbacks, work was done to advance the efforts of the MO Branch. An OSS officer had been sent to England in early 1942 to study the British Political Warfare Executive (PWE), which conducted propaganda operations under the direction of the Foreign Office. This resulted in a draft of a complete program for Morale Operations.[36] In the early months of its development a MO Field Manual was developed in conjunction with the Planning Staff. MO was ultimately defined in this Field Manual as:

> All measure of subversion other than physical used to create confusion and division, and to undermine the morale and the political unity of the enemy through any means operating within or purporting to operate within enemy countries and enemy occupied or controlled countries, and from bases within other areas, including neutral areas, where action or counteraction may be effective against the enemy.[37]

3.   The OWI Overseas Branch

Also as a result of the breakup of the COI, an executive order was signed on 13 Jun 1943 consolidating several government offices and agencies, including much of the COI, and forming the new OWI.[38] This executive order gave OWI the authority to use

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[34] With the reorganization of the COI to the OSS the function of "black" propaganda was originally meant to be a function of the SO Branch, but the organization and functions of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and Psychological Warfare Executive (PWE) and their inter-agency conflicts made this untenable. SO and MO as a single branch within the OSS would have complicated collaboration and coordination with its British counterparts, therefore the functions of sabotage (SO) and "black" propaganda (MO) were placed in separate branches.

[35] Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS*, 216.

[36] Ibid., 212.

[37] Director of Strategic Services, *Morale Operations Field Manuel – Strategic Services (Provisional)* (Washington, DC: Director of Strategic Services, 1943), 1, http://www.soc.mil/OSS/assets/morale-operations-fm.pdf.

[38] Lawrence C. Soley, *Radio Warfare: OSS and CIA Subversive Propaganda* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1989), 68.

"press, radio, and motion pictures to create and conduct 'information programs' to facilitate an 'informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad,' of the war effort, government policies, combat activates, and war aims."[39] Robert Sherwood, a former playwright and previous head of the FIS, now became head of the OWI's Overseas Branch and would throughout the war consistently fight Donovan over the role and use of propaganda. Sherwood always saw the focus of the branch as emphasizing the truth and projecting President Roosevelt's philosophies. Sherwood argued that "propaganda broadcasts should stick scrupulously to the facts, and let the truth eventually prevail," and that America would suffer "if we emulated Axis methods and resorted to lies and deceit."[40] This philosophy would drive the office's emphasis on true attribution activities throughout the war.

4.   The U.S. Army's Psychological Warfare Division

Between WWI and the beginning of WWII, the U.S. Army's capability to conduct psychological warfare had all but disappeared. Doctrine, organization, personnel, as well as anyone in uniform with experience in the field were all absent. Most importantly, U.S. Army psychological warfare lacked a champion to mobilize support in the way Donovan did for the OSS. The U.S. Army's ability to operate in this realm was quickly outpaced by the OWI and OSS, and these heavily civilian run operations were unlikely to cease, something unsettling to the senior military commanders, who wanted to ensure control of all activities in their combat theater.[41]

During a reorganization of the War Department's Military Intelligence Division in March 1942, the Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB), G2 was formed, and would begin the effort to organize and coordinate the U.S. Army efforts. But, the War Department's PWB was quickly overshadowed by the theater level PWBs that conducted most of the planning, coordination and implementation, and slowly established control

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[39] Clayton D. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade Against Nazi German* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 113.

[40] Patrick K. O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs: The Unknown Story of the Men and Women of World War II's OSS* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 229.

[41] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 143–144.

over what could be best described as a "military-controlled, civilian-operated psychological warfare system."[42] The U.S. Army did begin creating military units dedicated to executing psychological warfare. In December 1942, the PWB created the First and Second Broadcast Station Operating Detachments forming the First Combat Propaganda Company. These later evolved into the First Mobile Radio Broadcast Company of which there was eventually five companies, and was a self-contained, army-controlled mobile unit containing public address systems, radios, monitoring sets, loudspeakers, typewriters, printing presses, and leaflet bombs. These units were specifically designed to support military operations through tactical propaganda and first saw action in the North African and Mediterranean theaters.[43]

As the policy debates concerning the proper role of propaganda and psychological warfare remained unresolved, the U.S. Army's growing capability only complicated the matter, but ultimately came to dominate control of the effort. In 1944, Brigadier General Robert A. McClure was tasked with developing a new psychological warfare agency that would plan, coordinate, and executed psychological warfare in the European theater. In April of that year, the Psychological Warfare Division, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (PWD/SHAEF) was established and quickly began consolidating the planning and resources of the OWI, OSS, as well as British partner organizations.[44] Unique among the other SHAEF divisions, the PWD had both staff-planning and operational functions. The official post-war account of the PWD lists their mission as follows:

> (a) To wage psychological war against the enemy.

> (b) To use the various media available to psychological warfare to sustain the morale of the people of friendly nations occupied by the enemy and to cause the people of these countries to acquiesce in the wishes of the Supreme Commander.

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[42] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 149.

[43] Ibid., 155–157.

[44] Ibid., 187–188.

(c) To conduct so-called Consolidation Propaganda operations in liberated friendly countries.

(d) To control information services in Allied-occupied Germany.[45]

This new leadership and organization finally brought some semblance of control and order to the U.S. psychological warfare effort and helped tie it to military operations that would ultimately liberate Europe.

B.   RELATIVE POWER

WWII was a relatively conventional, total war between nation-states, and as such, power throughout the conflict can be measured primarily through military strength and resource advantages. There were many economic and diplomatic factors as well, but they often shifted as a result of the operational success of the militaries involved. Also for this reason, when looking at the conflict as a whole, absolute power and relative power seem to coincide, as the totality of the conflict meant that absolute power changed throughout the war. In this case, when referring to relative power, we are referring to the military strength and resource advantages of the militaries facing one another. In other words, we mean absolute power. For this case, we will assess the power advantage of the Allied forces and Axis powers in Europe—specifically Germany—through key military events that significantly affected a change in power.

From the beginning of the war in 1939 through 1942 we can assess that Germany and the Axis powers were in a stronger power position over the Allies. During this period, they occupied most of Europe and North Africa, beginning with Poland and France, threatened the United Kingdom in the Battle of Britain and through dominating North Atlantic shipping, and initiated Operation Barbarossa which saw German forces almost reach Moscow. It was not until 1943 that we can assess power began to shift away from Germany and towards the Allies. The Germans began 1943 with their first major defeat at Stalingrad, and it saw Allied victory in North Africa, and the invasion and surrender of Italy. Despite these setbacks, Germany still remained strong through 1943,

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[45] *The Psychological Warfare Division, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force: An Account of its Operations in the Western European Campaign 1944–1945* (Bad Homburg, Germany: Headquarters, U.S Forces, European Theater, 1945), 31–33.

as it maintained control of mainland Europe and were putting up fierce resistance in Italy and Russia. From 1944 to 1945, power was gained and maintained by the Allies. This period saw the dominance of Allied strategic bombing, the invasion of mainland Europe at Normandy, Russia's march to Berlin, and ultimately the surrender of Germany.

While this is a very brief synopsis of the events of World War II in the European theater, it provides key periods that reflects shifts in power and will allow us to compare those periods to the use of attribution in influence activities.

C.   INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES AND ATTRIBUTION

The COI's FIS was the most active psychological warfare element in the early years of the war, later becoming the OWI's Overseas Branch. Its most successful program was the Voice of America (VOA), which was a "true" attribution platform and transmitted its first broadcast on 5 February 1942. Within weeks it was broadcasting in multiple languages to include German, French, Spanish, and Italian. By June that list of languages covered most of those in Europe and the Middle East, and "programs were being produced six days a week; [and] propaganda analysis reports were being issued two or three times a day."[46] As with all FIS and OWI programs, they focused on delivering factual information to both enemy forces and occupied countries, but with an appropriate spin that favored the allied cause. That being said, the OWI careful recognized Allied failures, such as the setbacks during the landings at Anzio, but maintained an optimistic and hopeful tone. All of the themes had a goal of destroying enemy military and civilian morale, such as reporting agreements between nations on political and military goals in order to increase the feeling of German isolation and inevitable defeat. As major operations approached, such as the allied landings at Normandy, OWI programs focused their efforts. Specific objectives, such as weakening the Wehrmacht's morale, became the priority. Eventually, over 280 minutes of German programing were broadcast each week. These included spot-news bulletins and eyewitness reports, news commentaries, and music.[47]

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[46] Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS*, 40.

[47] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 211–212.

As the war progressed into 1944, the U.S. Army's PWD—with its OWI support—focused on tactical propaganda, which was deemed more appropriate for the immediate requirements of winning the war. The U.S. Army PWD also focused it operations on true attribution activities with truthful information. This propaganda focused on enemy surrender appeals and remained straightforward compared to the political and moral arguments presented in the more strategic messaging. It was decided the more immediate needs of survival were a priority for enemy soldiers over the ideological considerations they may have.[48]

The major delivery method for propaganda by the PWD was the leaflet. These could be dropped by air, eventually with a new leaflet "bomb," or by artillery or mortars. The first leaflets were dropped over Germany on 28 July 1943, but these operations would be in the minority this early in the war. Leaflet operations significantly ramped up just before D-Day in 1944, and the first allied heavy bomber formation to fly over Normandy prior to the invasion was flown by the Special Leaflet Squadron. The leaflets dropped that morning were intended to warn French and Belgian workers to stay away from transportation facilities. Over the following two days over nine million leaflets were dropped in support of operations, most included messages from Eisenhower to the people in occupied territory. Other leaflets, printed in German, Russian, and Polish, directly targeted enemy soldiers—many having been conscripted—to induce surrender.[49]

Also after the landings at Normandy, loudspeakers were first utilized by psychological warfare units. These had mixed success at first and could be incredibly dangerous for the operators who inevitably drew enemy fire. One successful operation was conducted to reduce the German garrisons around Cherbourg. After a large bombardment which saw over 10,000 men surrender, a loudspeaker team arrived which sought to draw out the remainder. Over two days they used a variety of appeals in German, English, and Polish, and in that short time period induced the surrender of over

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[48] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 219.

[49] Sandler, *"Cease Resistance: It's Good for You!,"* 83–85.

2,100 additional enemy.[50] Similar stories could be told of loudspeakers units supporting combat operations throughout France and into Germany.

Throughout the course of WWII, the OSS MO Branch conducted operations that included all manner of propaganda development and dissemination, but they specifically focused on false and non-attribution activities. There are several operations that typify the MO Branch's mission and demonstrate their unique role within the OSS and the larger U.S. psychological warfare campaign. These operations can be differentiated by the many methods used to disseminate propaganda that included leaflets, radio broadcasts, newspapers, forged or altered print products, and the use of agents for spreading rumors. All of these operations used either false or non-attribution activities.

One key method that set the MO Branch apart from other U.S. information services was the use of rumors, primarily spread through agents. One such operation used sympathetic German POWs as agents who were recruited to spread false rumors and disseminate printed materials behind enemy lines. This was named Operation Sauerkraut and began when an MO team learned of the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler in July 1944. The OSS team interviewed German POWs to identify those who disagreed with the Nazi party and the German Army and were willing to act as agents. The POW agents were then trained and equipped and sent back through the German lines. In addition to spreading rumors, the agents were supplied with 3,000 sheets of propaganda material for dissemination. The themes and messages for this initial mission all centered on the theme that, now that Hitler was likely dead, "the war was over . . . there was insurrection in Germany and there was no need to lose limb or life for a cause that was lost."[51] This initial mission was considered successful enough that 12 more missions were conducted involving 50 POWs.[52]

The idea of using agents, whether POWs, partisans, or Allies, for spreading rumors continued to grow, and MO teams attached to each army of the Twelfth Army

[50] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 227.

[51] O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 231–232.

[52] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 201.

Group "conducted sixty operations behind the lines, disseminating rumors, leaflets, stickers, stencils, and forged letters in mailboxes, under the doors of dwelling, in railroad cars and stations, in taverns, and by word of mouth."[53] Because carrying a large number of printed products was cumbersome for an agent attempting to work behind the lines, OSS R&D developed stickers and precut stencils that looked handwritten, along with special paint pens for quick application. The quickness which these materials could be applied also reduced the risk of exposure for agents behind the lines.[54]

There were several occasions where OSS MO officers went behind enemy lines themselves. Two examples are the missions to Crete, codenamed Apple, and to Greece, codenamed Ulysses. These began in the spring of 1944 with the Apple mission and consisted of six men who were deployed to enemy occupied Crete with the mission to confirm reports of low German morale and increase partisan activity. This was accomplished with the team estimating a relatively low number of German troops would fight in the event of an invasion.[55] The team continued its subversive work and prepped the area for pre-invasion operations. In addition to propaganda work that included a weekly soldier's paper and leaflets, the MO officers also conducted parleys and negotiations with German units to facilitate surrender.[56]

The Ulysses mission conducted in Greece began with the infiltration of a four-man team to the region of Volos. The team arrived in July 1944 to take advantage of reports of sympathetic guerrilla activity. There the team distributed newspapers, pamphlets, and printing upwards of 37,000 leaflets, while also conducting some sabotage operations.[57] The team took part in Operation Hemlock which capitalized on the kidnapping and death of two top German generals in the Mediterranean Theater. "Poison pen" letters were sent to Nazi officers which included a forged letter from the recently dead German commander in the Peloponnesus, Major General Franz Kreipe. The forged

[53] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 201.

[54] Ibid., 200–201.

[55] Ibid., 196.

[56] O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 234.

[57] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 196–197.

letters stated that the General "had been angered at the decision of the German High Command to sacrifice all German troops in Greece."[58] It goes on to say that he has decided to go to the Allies in order to save his men from total destruction, and his death was attributed to the Gestapo as a result of the letter. One such letter was placed on the desk of the Volos garrison commander by a Greek resistance agent. These operations ultimately resulted in hundreds of German desertions.[59]

Another operation which highlights MO Branch's use of forgery and unconventional forms of dissemination was Operation Cornflake. This operation began in early 1945 with the concept to send propaganda directly to German citizens and soldiers through the mail, directly "to the German breakfast table."[60] After extensive research on the German postal system, forged stamps were developed, some with a skull superimposed over Hitler's face, and replica mail bags produced to facilitate the infiltration into the postal system. These mailbags were stuff with propaganda to include "poison pen" letters, newspapers, leaflets, and posters with addresses obtained from prewar German telephone directories. Some letters were even personalized by German exiles. In order to insert the mailbags in to the postal system, the bags were carried along during routine bombing and strafing missions against German rail yards that were along known postal routes. During the attack, the aircraft would drop the mailbags which would later be picked up by Germans assuming they had been blown astray during the attack. Ultimately, twenty missions were conducted, dropping 320 bags of propaganda mail. During postwar integrations, POWs revealed that many soldiers received a popular "black" propaganda newspaper via Cornflakes mail that resulted in Gestapo actions in response. This was an ingenious dissemination method that used the adversary's systems against them and delivered highly personalized propaganda directly to their targets. It was reported to have negatively affected civilian morale, not to mention creating confusion in the German postal system.[61]

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[58] O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 235.

[59] Ibid., 235–236.

[60] Ibid., 237.

[61] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 202; O'Donnell, *Operatives, Spies, and Saboteurs*, 237–238.

D.   OUTCOMES

Assessing the contribution of U.S. psychological warfare efforts in the European theater is difficult. Much of the assessment made after the war was anecdotal and subjective, and published accounts usually focused only on the successful operations. The MO Branch in particular was unable to conduct postwar studies due to the lack of personnel and its quick disbanding after the war. Despite this lack of quantitative information, we can piece some of this evidence together to get a general picture. Some effectiveness can be measured by the response of the German government and military to counter these influence activities during the war and through the interrogation of POWs.

The earliest psychological warfare activities were conducted by the COI's FIS which quickly established VOA, but German power during that period of the war made it difficult for true attribution messages to have the impact it would gain later in the war. While the FIS was quick to attack weaknesses in the Axis powers whenever possible, the arguments presented were often weak. Kermit Roosevelt, in his post-war report on the OSS, described these early efforts and stated that arguments for the weakness of Axis partners "did not look impressive in 1942."[62] Roosevelt also describes how "when the axis was winning victory after victory," the FIS could only attempt to win "moral victories" by committing the enemy to an impossible or unlikely goal and then disparaging them when they failed to achieve it.[63] By late 1942, the OWI was operating in Europe and North Africa, and their premiere program VOA was competing with Axis programs, at least in terms of volume and reach.[64]

Despite their larger size and resources compared to the OSS and PWD, the OWI's true attribution and truthful messaging also failed to appeal to the Germans while they had the power advantage. Though the larger U.S. psychological warfare effort was barely operating in the early months of the war, the British Royal Air Force was already dropping hundreds of thousands of leaflets during their night bombing raids. According

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[62] Roosevelt, *War Report of the OSS*, 38.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 127.

to PWD/SHAEF official account after the war, these had "no noticeable effect," as the "time and circumstances were not ripe for psychological warfare."[65]

The OWI strategic propaganda, while more effective as the war progressed, is still difficult to assess as the civilian audiences within Germany were not as easily studied as the POWs in post-war surveys. One way to gauge effectiveness is in the German response to many of the programs, specifically how often they were jammed, and how often OWI messages were referred to in German programs. OWI claimed that 40 percent of their French-language programs were jammed and in two months of 1942, the Germans mentioned VOA broadcasts 300 times in their own programs. This would indicate the message content was effective, but also indicates that German capability at the time allowed them to block the messages from reaching a significant portion of its intended audience.[66]

With a local audience and the small area that defines the tactical propaganda conducted by the PWD, the impact of their operations is much easier to gauge. Numbers of POWs taken, the quantity of leaflets they carried—specifically safe conduct passes—and their opinions on them, and the measures taken by German commanders to counter the leaflets were all being used as a way of measure effectiveness. There are numerous accounts of Germans surrendering, sometimes in the thousands, with leaflets in their hands or pockets. One study found that "over 90 percent of POWs had at least seen leaflets of various sort and that 75 percent were in some way affected by them."[67] These can be directly tied to PWD tactical efforts in support of military commanders that began in 1943 in North Africa, but intensified significantly after the invasion of Normandy.

E.   CONCLUSION

Given these examples of influence activities and their outcomes, we can make some assessments about the relation of attribution to relative power. An important observation is that much the organization and resources needed to conduct psychological

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[65] *The Psychological Warfare Division Supreme, Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force*, 31–33.

[66] Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors*, 218.

[67] Ibid., 230–231.

warfare was not in place until Germany began losing relative power. With the notable exception of VOA, this was the case for organizations that focused on true attribution, so there may have been a greater effect were they more active early in the war. That being said, there appears to be a far greater preponderance of true attribution activities immediately before and during Allied offensive operations, when power is shifting or already shifted in their favor. One case study states that "McClure and his subordinates were fully aware that psywar was useless, even counter-productive, until coordinated with obvious and convincing military power."[68] This might explain the minimal use of such activities by the PWD—who used mostly true attribution—prior to offensive operations, essentially when relative power is about to, or has been, gained. They may have also learned from their British counterparts who dropped leaflets early in the war with little effect.

Part of the ineffectiveness of true attribution early in the war may have come from the inability to easily reach audiences when power was low. With power at a low point, the allies lack of air superiority may have made leaflet drops too risky to undertake. Also, prior to the Allied invasion of Normandy, German forces could focus their attention on maintaining internal stability. Radio broadcasts from a known source are more likely to be jammed by an enemy with relative power—implying that they are well-equipped and not preoccupied with defending against kinetic attacks.

It is also significant to note that the use of true attribution messaging was highly effective when the enemy was surrounded or trapped. This was observed in the use of loudspeakers against the garrisons around Cherbourg, where the enemy was cut off and already heavily bombarded. Most other examples of loudspeaker use that resulted in large numbers of prisoners mirror this one. Obviously, when an enemy is surrounded, messages will be more appealing than they would be under less dire circumstances. Still, it is important to establish that true attribution makes more sense in these situations than false and non-attribution messages.

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[68] Sandler, *"Cease Resistance: It's Good for You!," 82*.

The OSS was also slow to organize early in the war, but the false and non-attribution influence activities they conducted appeared more significant and successful then the true attribution activities conducted during this early period of Allied weakness. Significantly, MO Branch was able to influence audiences otherwise inaccessible when Allied power was weak. This access was possible due to the nature of MO Branch's false and non-attribution activities and their ability to operate behind the lines themselves or through agents and partisans. Similar to PWD's true attribution activities, it appears the capacity and capability of MO Branch's false and non-attribution activities also increased in conjunction with Allied power. While this meant they also increased their operations just prior to and during offensive operations, their effectiveness was less significant than the concurrent true attribution activities during the period Allied relative power.

III.   JUSPAO AND MACV-SOG IN VIETNAM

The United States intervened in Vietnam to prevent a theorized effect of communism known as the "domino theory"—the belief that if one country in a region fell to communism, it was only a matter of time before other countries in the region would do the same. With this in mind, U.S. intervention in Vietnam was twofold. First, there was the military component, where a weak South Vietnamese military needed substantial assistance in funding, training, and equipment. The second component of the conflict was political, where the government of South Vietnam needed to win over the population from growing communist influence and coercion. While the United States waged a massive kinetic campaign against North Vietnam, that effort was equally waged in the information environment.

The U.S. battle to create anti-communist nationalism in South Vietnam represented one of the largest information operations in U.S. history. The United States flooded both North and South Vietnam with every medium of information available. Billions of leaflets covered the countryside, more than 1,500 for every person in the country.[69] Posters, banners, newspapers, cartoons, comics, stickers, magazines, and anything able to be printed was utilized. Mass media such as television and radio were also used, propagated by newly constructed television stations and radio transmitters. Loudspeakers blasted messages from tactical vehicles on the ground and war planes in the sky. It was an effort focused on diverting the population's attention away from the influence of the communist north and toward the anti-communist south.

Throughout the conflict, North Vietnam maintained a narrative of its own. North Vietnam viewed U.S. intervention as a continuation of colonialism and occupation of Vietnam. Vietnam had a long history of foreign occupation and a deep tradition of popular resistance working against such invaders. French colonialism, economic exploitation, and capitalist undermined Vietnamese society.[70] In the battle for support of

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[69] Robert W. Chandler, *War of Ideas: The U.S. Propaganda Campaign in Vietnam* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), 3.

[70] Ibid., 7.

the Vietnamese people, North Vietnam easily exploited U.S. involvement as another "foreign invader" with the government of the South being their "puppet." Given its history, this narrative became a foundation for North Vietnam's ability to appeal to the masses. The North's narrative put the United States and South Vietnam at an ideological disadvantage forcing them to engage in defensive or reactionary propaganda.[71]

As a result, the Vietnam War became more than a military conflict; it was a long, drawn out battle for legitimacy between the north and the south. Each side attempted to sway the largely uncommitted populace to the idea that its respective version of nationalism represented the best way forward to meet their needs. In a country seeking unity, but historically divided by civil conflict, foreign intervention did little more than extend the inevitable defeat of one side over the other.[72] In the case of Vietnam, while the United States and the South won nearly every military engagement, their victories were not enough to win the war of ideas: "Saigon lost the hearts and minds battle."[73]

A.   BACKGROUND

1.   First Indochina War

In the aftermath of World War II, the Allied forces moved to claim lost and new territories. Each side's desire for increased power and influence represented the unofficial end of mutual compromise between communist Soviet Union and the democratic West. The results were a series of proxy-wars waged across the globe on behalf of both sides to gain and maintain power and influence. The Soviet Union and China wished to continue spreading communism, while the United States wanted to stop it in favor of democracy.

In 1946, this struggle took shape in French Indochina, which consisted of what is now Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The people of what became North Vietnam, under the flag of Viet Minh and backed by China, sought independence from France in the First Indochina War. After nine years of war culminating with the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Accords were signed, calling for a ceasefire and a withdrawal of French

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[71] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 9.

[72] Ibid., 10.

[73] Ibid., 11.

forces from the region. Additionally, French Indochina was divided into Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, which was subsequently also divided into a North and South at the 17th parallel line until elections could be held.

But the elections were never held, and China and the Soviet Union officially recognized the Viet Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam as the legitimate government of Vietnam. Meanwhile, the French maintained their claim to the State of Vietnam, which was subsequently backed by Great Britain and the United States. As such, this dispute led to the Second Indochina War, or as it is known to the United States, the Vietnam War. From 1954 to 1960, tensions between North and South Vietnam largely consisted of guerrilla operations to undermine each other's legitimacy. During this time, both the Chinese and the United States began sending military advisors and supplies in support of their respective causes. The official formation of the National Liberation front, or Viet Cong, began in 1960.

2.   Expanding Operations

By 1961, President Kennedy was facing several international failures such as the Bay of Pigs, the Laotian government's settlement with their communist bloc, and the Berlin Wall. He was determined not to lose any more ground to communist influence. A little over a year later, the world watched the Cuban Missile Crisis on television. President Kennedy sought an opportunity to contest growing communist power, and the emerging situation in Vietnam seemed like a potential victory. While Kennedy's initial assessment did not call for large-scale involvement of U.S. ground forces, by the end of 1963, U.S. troop numbers exceeded 16,000. In early November 1963, South Vietnam's president, Ngo Diem, was killed in a coup that provided North Vietnam with opportunities to increase their insurgent efforts in the midst of transition. As a result of the increased activity, U.S. troops were inserted at every level of the South Vietnamese Army to advise and assist with the growing instability.

The political chaos that ensued following the assassination of President Ngo increased pressure for U.S. resolve in Vietnam. This was exacerbated by the assassination of U.S. President Kennedy in late November 1963. While Kennedy had maintained a

limited focus on Vietnam, the deteriorating situation in the south put pressure on now-President Lyndon Johnson to refocus the war effort. The next incident was what became known as the "Gulf of Tonkin Incident." A U.S. naval vessel off the coast of North Vietnam was purportedly fired upon by North Vietnamese ships and returned fire. In response to the incident, Johnson went to congress seeking additional authorities for military action. Congress approved the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorized him to conduct full scale military operations in Vietnam. The final event came in 1965. Following an attack on a U.S. Marine barracks in the south, the U.S. initiated a large scale strategic bombing campaign against North Vietnam. Within days of the bombing campaign, additional U.S. forces were also on the ground, and by the end of the year, nearly 200,000 U.S. troops were in Vietnam.[74]

3. War of Ideas

Since the end of the first Indochina War in 1954, the United States, through a myriad of governmental agencies, had been attempting to build up the legitimacy of the South Vietnamese government using information operations.[75] According to Colonel Francis Kelly, "These operations, if carefully planned and skillfully executed, promote a sense of loyalty to the government and motivate the people to cooperate with the government in order to defeat the insurgency."[76] That said, the various agencies were working independently toward their own interpretation of goals and end states. As a result, the U.S. message in South Vietnam was uncoordinated and problematic. In 1965, a representative from the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Director of the United States Information Agency (USIA) visited Vietnam to assess the IO effort.[77]

The two officials recommended standing up a single organization to integrate all information assets. This became the Joint United States Public Affairs Office

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[74] "Vietnam War," History.com, accessed November 14, 2017, http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history.

[75] Chandler, *War of Ideas,* 25.

[76] Francis J. Kelly, *Vietnam Studies: U.S. Army Special Forces 1961-1971* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 59, https://history.army.mil/html/books/090/90-23-1/CMH_Pub_90-23-1.pdf.

[77] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 25.

(JUSPAO).[78] The JUSPAO consisted of representatives from the USIA, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Director of JUSPAO had the responsibility of coordinating and deconflicting all information, but most importantly, for developing and implementing the psychological operations (PSYOP) strategy. According to a U.S. memorandum of agreement, this strategy had three different functions, "providing advice and assistance to the Vietnamese Ministry of Information; conducting psychological operations in support of U.S. objectives; and providing substantive supervision, direction and support of all mission elements involved in psychological operations."[79] The USIA and USAID were the primary organizations developing and disseminating information to build popular support for the government.[80] Meanwhile, the MACV and the PSYOP Directorate oversaw Army, Navy, Marine, and Air Force information programs.[81]

B.   RELATIVE POWER

The United States held an absolute power advantage over North Vietnam throughout the war. The coalition that operated against the North was four times larger than that of North Vietnam. Strategic bombing campaigns dropped more ordinance in Vietnam than in Europe during all of World War II. Technological innovation led to advancements such as the M-16 semi-automatic rifle, helicopter air assault operations, and secure ground to ground communications. Despite this, far superior troop numbers and advanced technologies were not enough for the United States and South Vietnam to bring the war to a quick, decisive victory.

The Vietnam War was not primarily a conventional fight, and as such, power could not be determined by conventional military strength alone. Instead, relative power is most effectively assessed through government legitimacy and their level of international support. Therefore, at the heart of the Vietnam conflict were the Vietnamese

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[78] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 25.

[79] Ibid., 259.

[80] Harry D. Latimer, *U.S. Psychological Operations in Vietnam* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1973), 5.

[81] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 28.

people, and the U.S. approach to war was alien to a battle for the support of the people. The large-scale application of force and strategic bombing campaigns with little regard for collateral damage undermined the U.S. military power advantage in Vietnam. U.S. historian Stanley Karnow said this approach in fact backfired stating, "The U.S. predicted that their approach would drive the North to capitulation, yet not only were the North Vietnamese resilient, the raids rekindled their nationalistic zeal, that generated more resistance to the foreign invaders."[82] With this taken into account, the North Vietnamese can be assessed to have had relative power over the United States.

North Vietnam was able to sustain their relative power against the United States by increasing their ability to conduct unconventional warfare. To a significant degree, this was facilitated by support from China and Russia. Chinese support to the North was similar to U.S. support to the South. It began in the 1950s with military advisers, then intensified with the Vietnam War. By the 1960s, China was providing North Vietnam's government with significant financial and economic aid, as well as troops, weapons, and equipment to the military. Russia provided North Vietnam much less in troop numbers, but still provided substantial support in the form of vehicles, weapons, and various types equipment.

The North Vietnamese also leveraged their relative power geographically through the Ho Chi Min Trail. The trail was more than just a supply network through the heart of Indochina; it was the heart of the North Vietnamese war effort.[83] Beyond Chinese and Russian support, it was the Ho Chi Minh Trail that tied everything together in the north and the south. By the end of the war, the Ho Chi Minh Trail consisted of everything from all-weather roads to footpaths and encompassed an entire supply and reinforcement network from north to south.[84] Despite specific targeting and several strategic bombing campaigns by the United States, the trail continued to be reinforced by the locals, making

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[82] Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2001), 121.

[83] Robert J. Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness: American SIGINT and the Indochina War, 1945-1975* (Fort Meade, MD: Center for Cryptologic History, National Security Agency, 2002), 94, https://fas.org/irp/nsa/spartans/spartans.pdf.

[84] Ibid., 94.

it a strategic asset for the North.[85] The willingness of the Vietnamese people, in both the north and south, to consistently maintain the trail in the midst of direct targeting by the United States demonstrated the North Vietnamese advantageous position over the U.S. with regard to the populace. According to a National Security Agency assessment, it was one of the great achievements in military engineering of the 20th century.[86]

C.   INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES AND ATTRIBUTION

The Vietnam War represented the largest information operations campaign in U.S. history. Given the vast purview of the JUSPAO, messaging came from a multitude of platforms from word of mouth to mass media and motion pictures. The JUSPAO messaging effort operated under five specified PSYOP Objectives:

> 1.) To impress upon the Vietnamese people that Free Vietnam will inevitably win its struggle against aggression. . .
>
> 2.) To impress upon the Viet Cong that their leaders cannot impose their will upon a people whose struggle for peace, security, and independence is supported by the might of the U.S. and other Free World nations.
>
> 3.) To create hope that the social revolution proceeding in Free Vietnam will produce a nation responsive to the will of the people. . . and to commit the Vietnamese people to identifying with the Republic's quest for peace, humanity, social justice and a vital national identity.
>
> 4.) To make the people aware of the truth that the communist leaders of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong offer nothing but alien schemes . . . which are oppressive and reactionary; and to inspire the people with contempt for the Viet Cong who expose the nation to death, and who oppose the creation of a truly Vietnamese social order and preservation of Vietnamese values and traditions.
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> 5.) To convince all Vietnamese people that the U.S. and other Free World Nations are in Vietnam to assist the Vietnamese people in defeating the aggression and building an improved economy.[87]

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[85] Hanyok, *Spartans in Darkness*, 95.

[86] Ibid., 94.

[87] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 266-267.

Despite the large number of entities producing messages, particularly within the military, assessments show that they generally followed the directives of the JUSPAO.[88] Moreover, given the complexity of the information environment and complex coordination lines within the U.S. bureaucracy, propaganda remained surprisingly consistent.[89] The JUSPAO would issue directives to each subordinate agency, then provide oversight to ensure a coordinated U.S. messaging effort.

Since the JUSPAO was made up of multiple agencies, it was authorized to use all types of attribution; true, partner concurring, false, and non-attribution. Each agency was executing their own information strategy and used different types of attribution. The USIA, USAID, and conventional forces under the MACV conducted true attribution and concurring partner attribution operations, while the CIA and MACV-SOG conducted mostly false and non-attribution operations. Additionally, the JUSPAO's frustration with Saigon's information operation effort informally created "light-grey" attribution, where the United States created and approved messaging for the South Vietnamese government, and this would become the favorite form of attribution for the United States.[90] The United States' weaker relative power position to North Vietnam did not change after the United States committed additional combat troops in 1965. Failing to realize their weaker relative power position may have contributed to why some information operations were more effective than others.

The USIA, USAID, and conventional components of the MACV conducted information operations using every means available. In addition to billions of leaflets, the JUSPAO produced magazines, newspapers, posters, and pamphlets. It produced radio and television programs, films, tapes, and cartoon books. To create a more long-term messaging platform, it upgraded television infrastructure and built new radio stations which reached over 80% of the population.[91] Major messaging programs consisted of

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[88] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 235.

[89] Ibid., 230.

[90] Ibid., 215.

[91] Ibid., 34.

surrender appeals and offensive propaganda targeting the North, as well as building legitimacy for the government in the south.[92]

Most of JUSPAO's messaging efforts began as true or partner attribution, where the messages were developed by the United States or South Vietnamese but ultimately stamped and approved by the South Vietnamese government. This approval process worked initially because of the low quantity of messaging, but as operations began to increase exponentially, the JUSPAO soon became frustrated with the bureaucracy, hesitancy, and perceived lack of effort by the South Vietnamese. As a result, the JUSPAO took matters into its own hands. Despite U.S. doctrine calling for a joint effort, the JUSPAO began its own independent information campaign, and was approving messaging for the South Vietnamese government.[93] The JUSPAO called this attribution "light-grey"—essentially partner attribution without their concurrence—and it soon became the only form of attribution being used.

The CIA and MACV-SOG conducted a very different information war. While they used many of the same mass media platforms for messaging, they used false and non-attribution given the sensitivity of their operations. Going beyond print media, these organizations stood up false attributed radio stations inside North Vietnam.[94] They established fake resistance networks in the north with connections to South Vietnam.[95] These fake resistance organizations drew the enemy's attention away from other operations. Additionally, to make their psychological operations more effective, their messages where often paired with civil-military operations.[96] Conducting the two types of operations in coordination with one another made them both more effective.[97]

The CIA and MACV-SOG's influence activities were often considered more psychological warfare than just information. Some of their activities, such as acts of

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[92] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 99, 155.

[93] Ibid., 215.

[94] Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi*, 148.

[95] Ibid., 139.

[96] Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 59.

[97] Ibid.

sabotage, were not informational in nature but were still seeking a psychological effect. These activities included the tainting rice crops, doctoring enemy ammunition, booby-traps, and wiretapping.[98] Meanwhile, their messaging focused less on strategic-level themes like the JUSPAO and more on local population's active support to fighting the insurgency. Operators within these two agencies demonstrated a greater appreciation for the Vietnamese people and their culture. U.S. Special Forces began creating extensive human networks through civic action programs.[99] They provided medical attention, assistance, and gave out supplies.[100] They also spent money in the local markets to aid the village economies. These actions built trust amongst local villages which enabled the MACV-SOG to better seed information and promote the U.S. narrative.[101] Their operations began at the local or village level, and then as operations expanded were handed off to partner Vietnamese forces for increased credibility. Additionally, to increase effectiveness, every effort was made to use a conduit closest to the operation for the source of messaging. For instance, a radio broadcast into North Vietnam would be read by someone who spoke a North Vietnamese dialect.

D.   OUTCOMES

The outcome of the Vietnam War yielded many different results for the parties involved. For the North Vietnamese, the last strategic bombing effort by the United States in 1972 crippled their industrial capacity for a time. However, the North would eventually take Saigon by 1975 and ultimately control Vietnam. Despite battlefield victories for the South, the failure to win over the people would ultimately bring an end to their rule. For the United States, Vietnam represented a major loss to communism, a failed, limited war, and a lesson about failing to realize the significance of one's relative power position.

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[98] Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi*, 157-158.

[99] Kelly, *Vietnam Studies*, 17.

[100] Ibid., 59.

[101] Ibid.

Despite the JUSPAO's best efforts to produce a Vietnamese narrative, they provided less than optimal results. By circumventing the Vietnamese, JUSPAO products often lacked the appropriate dialects, were considered too professional, and reeked of "American flavor."[102] On other occasions, products contained a U.S. control number which was a dead give-away as to the origin of the product. Meanwhile, the North took every opportunity to point out and exploit the JUSPAO mistakes on local radio broadcasts and initiate counter messaging efforts.[103] The U.S. true attribution activities were not deemed credible by the majority of the Vietnamese. In a conflict over the hearts and minds of the populace, unilateral messaging by a foreign invader proved ineffective. Interview data of prisoners and defectors revealed that a large majority of targeted populations read, saw, or heard U.S. messages. However, grievances or motivations for surrendering had more to do with their treatment by the North then the appeal of messages.[104]

With non-attribution and a relationship built through civic action, local audiences were more receptive to the MACV-SOG's messages. The merits of the MACV-SOG psychological warfare strategy could be seen on a regular basis in the North's official newspapers and broadcast media, where stories revealed a growing concern and alarm of resistance uprisings.[105] The North emphasized practical guidelines and measures to counter "covert operations," in direct response to the MACV-SOG efforts.[106]

E.   CONCLUSION

The JUSPAO was dissolved in 1972, just prior to the Paris Peace Accords, and despite its best efforts, the true effectiveness of its information activities remains questionable. Barry Zorthian, the director of JUSPAO, stated that "It is hard to justify much of our programming throughout the world as absolutely essential and, if you ask

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[102] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 220.

[103] Ibid., 221.

[104] Ibid., 91-92.

[105] Shultz, *The Secret War against Hanoi*, 168-169.

[106] Ibid., 171.

me to say every piece of printing we do meets the yardstick of essentiality, I would fall flat on my face."[107] He went on to argue that determining effectiveness meant drawing on some sort of quantitative measure of success, which he was unwilling to do."[108] Additionally he stated, "if the government's [South Vietnam] programs are not the proper ones, are not carried out skillfully, or do not meet the aspirations for the people, all other efforts come to naught, including psychological operations. This was the case in Vietnam."[109]

The United States' military advantage over the North Vietnamese should have brought it an easy victory. However, as our first hypothesis states, when in a position of weaker relative power, false or non-attributed information is more effective. We assess that the United States failed to understand that the North Vietnamese maintained the relative power advantage. The conflict was not just south versus north, or communist versus democracy, but rather a struggle for the hearts and minds of the uncommitted majority. In trying to win military campaigns, particularly with strategic bombing, the United States lost support from the population, while pushing the uncommitted toward the North.[110]

The JUSPAO true attribution messaging reverted to "light-grey" operations— essentially partner attribution without concurrence—which undermined its overall effectiveness. Moreover, as described by former U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Robert Chandler, "As foreigners, America could not produce national unity for the Vietnamese. Despite best efforts, the United States was seen as an occupier which diminished the credibility of attributed messages . . . Foreign participation in the Vietnamese war of ideas was doomed from the start."[111]

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[107] Robert J. Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style: The Joint United States Public Affairs Office, Vietnam and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 22.

[108] Kodosky, *Psychological Operations American Style*, 22.

[109] Latimer, *U.S. Psychological Operations in Vietnam*, 50.

[110] Chandler, *War of Ideas*, 147.

[111] Ibid., 11.

In contrast, the U.S. false and non-attributed messaging from the MACV-SOG, demonstrated real effectiveness, receiving a great deal of attention from the North. North Vietnamese press, public radio, and captured documents revealed gross overestimation and alarm of the MACV-SOG's psychological warfare program. Additionally, U.S. intelligence saw a spike in the North's policing and counter-intelligence effort to thwart imagined enemies as well as new and harsher punishments of the accused spies or counterrevolutionaries.[112] The extent of what non-attributed messages could have achieved was never tested. The U.S. administration denied multiple attempts by the MACV-SOG to expand false and non-attributed operations. Regardless, the evidence clearly suggests that the MACV-SOG false and non-attributed tactics had the attention of Hanoi.[113]

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[112] Shultz, *The Secret War Against Hanoi*, 168-169.

[113] Ibid., 171.

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IV.   RUSSIAN OPERATIONS IN CRIMEA

Russia's occupation and annexation of Crimea represented a clear victory achieved in large part through deliberate strategic communications by means of political, psychological, and informational strategies.[114] As the occupation of the Crimean Peninsula unfolded from 2014 to 2016 and relative power shifted in Russia's favor, the Russian's shifted the attribution of their messaging to suit their evolving needs. The coordination of events and messaging came with such precision and speed that the international community, including the United States, European Union (EU), United Nations, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, were unable to muster an effective response.

Across the international community, many have speculated what Russia's true motivations were for seizing Crimea. Regardless of the reason, the political situation that existed in Ukraine created conditions that were ripe for exploitation.[115] According to one report, "The government turnover in Kyiv resulted in public outrage, anxiety, and protests in the east. Russia sought to act before the Ukrainian state could politically consolidate itself after demonstrations."[116] Nonetheless, Ukraine's vulnerability alone does not adequately explain Russian President Vladimir Putin's action. The annexation of Crimea was symbolic for Russia and a message to the international community. It demonstrated Russia's willingness to take bold action against growing Western influence in the region and a renewed effort to return Russia to its Cold War era prestige.[117] Additionally, Ukraine's historical connection to Russia provides a fuller explanation beyond the contemporary situation.

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[114] Janis Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine: Implications for Latvian Defense Policy* (Riga, Latvia: National Defense Academy of Latvia, 2014), 6.

[115] Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), 19, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1498.html.

[116] Ibid., 19.

[117] Daniel Treisman, "Why Putin Took Crimea: The Gambler in the Kremlin," *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2016), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2016-04-18/why-putin-took-crimea.

A.   BACKGROUND

1.   Orange Revolution

To understand Russia's interest in Ukraine, it is useful to examine the recent history of Ukraine leading up to the annexation of Crimea. Following its independence, Ukraine was continually plagued by malign Russian influence within its government. Throughout much the 1990's, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma's policies brought the country closer to Russia, and in 2000 the Cassette Scandal put Kuchma in serious political trouble. The scandal erupted when recordings surfaced of Kuchma ordering the kidnapping of Georgiy Gongadze, an internet journalist who was well known for speaking out against political corruption and who had recently been murdered. No formal charges were ever brought upon Kuchma, but the political damage was done.

Kuchma decided against running for an additional term as president and instead chose to back his pro-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych in November 2004. When the polls closed in that election, no presidential candidate held the requisite majority necessary for victory. This sent the two leading candidates, pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych and pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko, into a runoff vote. Initial polling put Yushchenko well ahead of Yanukovych, but the official results determined that Yanukovych was the winner.

Immediately after results were published, claims of widespread voter fraud, corruption, and intimidation were reported, prompting mass protest in Kiev. Thousands of protestors took to the streets engaging daily in demonstrations, civil resistance, and civil disobedience in what became known as the Orange Revolution. The Orange Revolution brought the Ukrainian election under international scrutiny, eventually leading to the original election results being annulled and new elections taking place. With strict national and international electoral over-sight, pro-Western Yushchenko was elected president. Under President Yushchenko, Ukraine slowly moved away from the sphere of Russian influence in favor of stronger ties to the EU.

2.   Ukraine Revolution

The Orange Revolution and the election of a pro-Western president in Ukraine stoked Russian President Vladimir Putin's concerns of a growing geopolitical threat to what he considered Russian regional stability.[118] A pro-Western administration in Ukraine represented mounting opportunities for influence from the EU and the U.S. The Orange Revolution was also the second "color revolution" in the region. In Georgia in 2003, a pro-democratic populist movement also ended the former Soviet-era regime with the Rose Revolution.

With their regional influence under threat, Russia became increasingly proactive in its attempts to influence the political landscape. Within Russia, authorities continued to quickly squash any populist movement they perceived as opposing the current Russian administration. Throughout the region, Russia began propping up "patriotic" youth movements in neighboring countries.[119] From 2005 to 2013, these movements took pro-Russian postures, often to extreme levels. While these youth movements failed to gain a significant foothold in Ukraine, Russia was able to maintain a degree of influence at the national level, helping pro-Russian Yanukovych run for re-election in 2010, this time winning the presidency.[120]

Despite the election of pro-Russian Yanukovych, popular sentiment and the increasingly positive economic outlook caused Ukraine to continue to draw closer to the EU. Because of this trend, Russia continued its effort to influence Ukraine politics. In late 2013, Yanukovych was concluding a major trade agreement with the EU that would have

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[118] Sophie Pinkham, "How Annexing Crimea Allowed Putin to Claim He Had Made Russia Great Again," *Guardian*, March 22, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/22/annexing-crimea-putin-make-russia-great-again.

[119] Anton Shekhovtsov, "How Alexander Dugin's Neo-Eurasianist Geared Up for the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2005-2013," *Interpreter*, January 26, 2016, http://www.interpretermag.com/how-alexander-dugins-neo-eurasianists-geared-up-for-the-russian-ukrainian-war-in-2005-2013/.

[120] Elizabeth Piper, "Why Ukraine Spurned the EU and Embraced Russia," *Reuters*, December 19, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-russia-deal-special-report/special-report-why-ukraine-spurned-the-eu-and-embraced-russia-idUSBRE9BI0DZ20131219.

further pulled Ukraine away from Russian influence.[121] But, after a last-minute meeting with Putin, Yanukovych halted negotiations with the EU in favor of reopening a dialogue with Russia. President Yanukovych never provided a definitive reason for suspending talks with the EU, but according to Steven Pifer, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, the most pragmatic assumption is that Yanukovych feared the political consequences of the economic difficulties Ukraine would face entering the European market. Moreover, Russia would have compounded problems for Yanukovych by imposing economic sanctions on Ukraine as a consequence for entering into an agreement with the EU.

Within weeks of Yanukovych's decision to cease negotiations with the EU, over 100,000 demonstrators took to the streets in protest.[122] Demonstrations escalated for several months until Yanukovych and his inner-circle eventually abandoned their posts, making way for a new interim government in Ukraine. The exit of pro-Russian Yanukovych reduced Russia's ability to influence Ukraine, but vulnerabilities still existed. With a provisional government and Ukrainians still seeking social and political change, Putin identified a solution to his diminishing influence within the country. Before Ukraine could develop any political cohesion, Putin would seek to take advantage of the country's vulnerable state.[123]

3.   Military Intervention

In late February 2014, Putin made the strategic decision to seize the opportunity and bring Crimea back under Russian control. In an all-night meeting with his service chiefs, the Russian administration refined the plan for taking the Crimean Peninsula. With thousands of Russian troops already stationed in and around Ukraine and Crimea, masking troop movements, moving of vehicles and equipment, and various other military activity were easily explained away. Russian forces, facing almost no resistance,

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[121] Ian Traynor and Oksana Grytsenko, "Ukraine Suspends Talks on EU Trade Pact as Putin Wins Tug of War," *Guardian*, November 21, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/ukraine-suspends-preparations-eu-trade-pact.

[122] Alan Yuhas and Raya Jalabi, "Ukraine's Revolution and Russia's Occupation of Crimea: How We Got Here," *Guardian*, March 5, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/05/ukraine-russia-explainer.

[123] Kofman, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 66.

established a cordon around Crimea, cutting it off from the rest of Ukraine. Special operators wearing non-Russian uniforms seized key infrastructure, and on 27 February took over the Crimean Parliament, raising a Russian flag.[124] As Russian operators made their way into Crimea, they surrounded Ukrainian military bases and cut key communication lines to further isolate Ukrainian soldiers, helping to stifle any response. Additionally, Russian conventional forces massed along Ukraine's eastern border as a show of force while the Russian navy blockaded Ukraine's fleet. Within three weeks of Putin's meeting with his service chiefs, a small contingent of Russian soldiers forced the surrender of over 190 Ukrainian bases in Crimea, housing over 16,000 Ukrainian soldiers.[125]

B.   RELATIVE POWER

The conflict in Crimea was not a conventional conflict where both actors focused their militaries towards defeating the adversary. Instead, this conflict was fought diplomatically, informationally, and politically as much as it was militarily. For this reason, to assess the relative power within this conflict, we must analyze the diplomatic and informational instruments of power, as well any political and geographic elements that were relative to the conflict.

Relative to a conventional military engagement, the Russian military is substantially stronger than Ukraine's. They have a larger standing military, more reserve forces, and a greater available population to draw from. Russia has more ships, aircraft, and vehicles throughout their armed forces, each more technologically advanced than Ukraine's. Despite these advantages, relative to the Crimea peninsula, Ukraine maintained a military advantage throughout the conflict. Even at the height of annexation, there were only around 12,000 Russian soldiers in Crimea, compared to Ukraine's nearly 16,000 stationed on the peninsula alone.[126]

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[124] Kofman, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 89.

[125] Berzins, *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine*, 4.

[126] Kofman, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 5-6.

Despite its importance, military strength was not the most significant element of power in this conflict. The annexation of Crimea was not a "blitzkrieg" or "shock and awe" takeover. It did not consist of a large-scale military invasion, where Crimea was occupied by overwhelming Russian force. Several factors acted to constrain Russia's capacity to overtly employ their military power. First, although Ukraine was not yet a member of the EU, it had growing relationships with EU and NATO countries, countries that may have been willing to defend Ukraine's interests. Second, Russia is a permanent member on the UN Security Council, which means it ostensibly had an obligation to work within the confines of international law, or at least maintain that perception. Finally, despite Putin's boldness, there were a vast number of risks and potential repercussions involved with an overt military takeover of Crimea. For this reason, Russia needed the conflict to remain below a threshold that might trigger an international response. Therefore, in the early stages of Russia's Crimea operation, Ukraine had relative power.

C.   INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES AND ATTRIBUTION

While Russia's actions eventually shocked the world, they should not have come as a surprise given Russian rhetoric and shaping activities leading up to events in Crimea. In 2013, less than a year before these events unfolded, the Chief of the Russian Military Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, outlined Russia's new military methods. These new methods highlighted a significant shift from historical attrition warfare to a more holistic and indirect approach. In the case of Ukraine, Russia's influence campaign began well before military activities and lasted until annexation was complete.

The Russian model for messaging has been described as a "firehose of falsehood."[127] The basic concept of their model is to flood the information environment with so much data that target audiences are unable to discern fact from fiction. The method is characterized by four distinct features: it is high volume and multi-channeled; it is rapid, continuous, and repetitive; it displays a lack of commitment or objective reality; and it lacks any commitment to consistency. With an extensive reach into

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[127] Christopher Paul and Miriam Matthews, *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016), 1, https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE198.html.

neighboring countries, the largely state-owned media provided an unlimited number of conduits at Russian disposal.[128]

There were three primary target audiences for Russia's influence activities during the Crimean campaign, the first being the Russian people. In spite of the tight authoritarian control within Russia, the Russian administration still wanted to maintain a degree of support from the populace to bolster the legitimacy of its activities. The second audience was the population of Crimea. Given the large number of ethnic Russians on the peninsula, this was a sympathetic audience, and also essential. As Putin himself stated, the fundamental reason for Russia's actions in Crimea was to provide security for the ethnic Russians in Crimea. Therefore, this population's support for Russian intervention was pivotal to the plan. The third audience was the international community. In order for Russia to mitigate international condemnation for its activities, they needed to first minimize the extent of their operations and then eventually present its actions as necessary for the best interests of Russians within Crimea.

In addition to traditional means of disseminating their messages, Russia creatively used more modern means to further spread their narrative. The Kremlin launched a massive influence campaign through social media to support their actions. Deeper investigation of their efforts exposed "troll armies" made up of paid or bot personas that contributed exponentially to supporting Russian actions while simultaneously marginalizing any opposition.[129] To a lesser extent, Russia also conducted various other influence activities within Crimea to help set conditions on the ground. Focused on southern Ukraine and Crimea—but also employed throughout the country—Russia organized and funded pro-Russian demonstrations to garner support and contribute to the semblance of non-violence. Taken as a whole, these non-attributed activities attempted to gain popular support for Russian intervention in Crimea and persuade Ukrainian forces stationed on the peninsula to surrender or at least not intervene.[130]

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[128] Paul and Matthews, *The Russian "Firehose of Falsehood" Propaganda Model*, 2.

[129] Daisy Sindelar, "The Kremlin's Troll Army," *Atlantic*, August 12, 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/the-kremlins-troll-army/375932/.

[130] Kofman, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern*, 26.

Despite the relative power enjoyed by Ukraine at the beginning of the conflict, Russia steadily and decisively gained relative power. They gained this relative power by employing new military methods first outlined by General Gerasimov in 2013. This new view of warfare was based on "the idea that the main battlespace is the mind and, as a result, new-generation wars are to be dominated by information and psychological warfare, in order to achieve superiority in troops and weapons control, morally and psychologically depressing the enemy's armed forces personnel and civil population."[131] As Russia gained relative power, there was a noticeable shift in the attribution of their messaging.

Understanding that they had a weaker relative power position in the early stages of the conflict, Russia did not overtly acknowledge their actions. Before the international community had fully realized Russian intentions in Crimea, the Russian stance was to simply deny any involvement. During this time, Russian Defense Minister Igor Konashenkov stated that "evidence of Russian involvement in Ukraine 'has no relation to reality.'"[132] Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described satellite imagery of troop movements as images from some computer game and described accusations from the U.S. as a "smear campaign" and "unfounded public insinuations."[133] As Ukraine was being governed by its interim pro-Western government, if Russia had truly-attributed their activities during this early phase, it may have confronted significantly more resistance from the Ukrainian government, populace, and the international community.

As the presence of Russian forces and potential intervention become more accepted, the type of attribution began to shift. Initially President Putin identified separatists as "mine workers" and something no one should get obsessed over.[134] Later he denied that separatist forces in Ukraine were "Russian," but describing them as "local

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[131] Berzins. *Russia's New Generation Warfare in Ukraine*, 5.

[132] Maksymillian Czuperski et al., *Hiding in Plain Sight: Putin's War in Ukraine* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, 2015), 7, http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/hiding-in-plain-sight-putin-s-war-in-ukraine-and-boris-nemtsov-s-putin-war.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

self-defense forces."[135] Meanwhile, Konashenkov claimed the unit movements along the border were part of a tactical training exercise. While slight, this shift in attribution coincided with the gradual shift of relative power towards Russia as the Ukrainian government and international community's fear of escalation and hesitation to intervene became apparent.

Once the presence of Russian forces became undeniable, President Putin's attribution shifted again. He claimed that there was in fact Russian troops operating in Ukraine, however, their presence was one of a humanitarian mission. Moreover, Putin claimed that their involvement was at the direct request of the Ukrainian President. This significant shift in attribution only took place after Russia gained relative power over Ukraine. Once the Russian military had control of Crimea it would have been counterproductive for them to continue the policy of non-attribution.

Following Russia's non-attributed and partner-attributed military operations and influence activities, attribution shifted again. Seeing no military response from the international community and with relative power in their favor, Russia acknowledged their military actions, justifying them in the name of ethnic Russians. At an East Asia Foreign Minister's Meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov commented that he had heard frequent criticism in regard to their [Russian] decision to join the fight in Donbass; claiming it was in "protection of a Russian-speaking population."[136] Sometime later, Putin echoed the point that they "had to defend the Russian-speaking population of Donbass, forced to react to the desire of people living in Crimea to return to the Russian Federation."[137] Russia's transition to true attribution for its activities was now optimal for achieving their objectives given their relative power. It also supported their narrative of legitimacy and humanitarian aid.

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[135] Czuperski, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, 25.

[136] Afnna Yakutenko, "Lavrov Admits Russian Involvement in Instigating the War in Eastern Ukraine," *Kyiv Post*, July 2, 2016, https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/lavrov-admits-russian-involvement-instigating-war-eastern-ukraine.html.

[137] Halya Coynash, *Putin Admits to Russian Military Involvement in Donbass* (Ukraine: Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, 2016), http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1476316494.

D.   OUTCOMES

For Russia, the annexation of Crimea was a significant victory, achieving a number of considerable objectives. The most obvious success is that Crimea is now incorporated into the Russia Federation, increasing their ability to exert influence within the region, but the new territory provided Russia with both economic opportunities and challenges as a result of their geopolitical gain.[138] Also significant is that, despite their eventual overt violation of international treaties and laws, there was no immediate threat to their sovereignty over Crimea. While several nations, including the United States, publicly condemned Putin and Russia, no major military or diplomatic effort was made to remove Russia from Crimea. The United States responded with economic sanctions—which are having a significant effect—however, they have not convinced Russia to leave Crimea. Additionally, given Putin's boldness to outright deny allegations of wrong-doing to the media and act despite opposition, Russia may have elevated its bargaining position within the international community, by demonstrating a "decisive and competent use of military force in pursuit of political ends."[139] As such, Putin's actions have prompted neighboring countries to increased preparations against similar operations, and it is not clear if Russia's success in Crimea will ultimately become a strategic blunder.[140]

The Russian objectives in Crimea are in direct support of Putin's strategic goal of eliminating the unipolar world in favor of a polycentric international order.[141] Russia's new "method of warfare," outlined by Gerasimov, was on full display during their annexation of Crimea. While their methods are not new, the annexation of Crimea demonstrates a modern resurgence of waging war outside of traditional military means and has spurred fear and debate while blurring the lines of legitimacy.

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[138] Andy Akin, "What Do We Know about Russia's "Grand Strategy?," *Washington Post*, May 2, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/05/02/what-do-we-know-about-russias-grand-strategy/?utm_term=.364114a6ea13.

[139] Kofman, *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern*, 73.

[140] Ibid., 77.

[141] Akin, "What do we know about Russia's "Grand Strategy?"

E. CONCLUSION

Operating below a threshold of armed conflict, Russia's attribution changed in concert with the shift of relative power in their favor. As our first hypothesis suggests, false or non-attribution is more beneficial when in a relatively weak position. Ukraine initially had the relative power advantage against Russia in the conflict, and with a history of Russian influence contributing to the Ukrainian political turmoil and social unrest, truly attributed activities would have further damaged their cause. Thus, the early situation in Ukrainian favored a non-attributed approach. The degree to which their non-attributed messaging was effective is controversial. However, there is no refuting the initial success of their overall approach. Despite intelligence reporting from the international community and first-hand knowledge from Ukrainian officials, Russia's approach provided them with just enough plausible deniability to allow large scale troop movements and a build up along the borders that set the conditions for Russia's eventual occupation.

As our second hypothesis implies, once relative power is gained, attribution should shift to true attribution. With operational success and relative power gained by Russia, their non-attribution shifted toward true attribution. Russia reached a threshold where it could no longer attribute their actions to other organizations and still achieve its objectives. Russia also needed to maintain their narrative of legitimacy to help keep outside mediation at bay and justify their continued intervention. Shifting from non-attribution to true attribution as relative power shifted in their favor allowed Russia to balance the deniability of nefarious activities with the credibility of overt activities.

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V. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This thesis examined the use of attribution and its effectiveness relative to power. This was done to identify what conditions might inform the choice of attribution in U.S. influence activities. Specifically, we chose to examine the condition of relative power and assessed its role in the effectiveness of influence activities with different types of attribution. Overall, we did find a correlation between relative power and the use of attribution, but we evaluate that correlation as weak due to the difficulty in identifying measures of effectiveness and their direct link to operational success in the historical record. An interesting and unexpected finding was the correlation between the use of attribution and the distance of the target audience from combat or an immediate threat. The following is a synopsis of our findings as they relate to our two hypotheses.

A.   HYPOTHESIS 1

False attribution and non-attribution influence activities are most beneficial when in a position of relative weakness.

1.   World War II

The U.S. psychological warfare effort was slow to start as the United States entered WWII. With the exception of the VOA, which began operating in 1942, the influence activities using true attribution were not robust when U.S. power was weak, and the evidence for its effectiveness is difficult to assess. The true attribution activities that did take place during this period of relative weakness were described as difficult to craft and not particularly effective. The OSS—which conducted primarily false and non-attribution activities—was able to begin operations sooner. One reason for this was their ability to access target audiences otherwise unavailable to a true attribution message, whose known source could be more easily blocked or countered. They also typically targeted audiences that were not under immediate threat—such as civilian populations and troops not immediately engage in combat activities—where U.S. relative power could be assessed as weaker. Engaging this more distant target audience continued throughout the war, and as relative power in the war shifted to the Allies, their target

audience seemed to shift farther from the front lines compared to the true attribution activities during the same period.

Both the ineffectiveness of COI and OWI's true attribution activities and the better results of the MO Branch's false attribution activities support Hypothesis 1, with the important caveat that no psychological warfare organization was fully operational or able to properly measure effectiveness for much of the period of Allied relative weakness.

2. Vietnam

The counterinsurgency aspects of Vietnam were in large part a struggle for the support of the Vietnamese people. Despite the U.S. conventional military advantage, their relative power was weaker than that of the North Vietnamese. During the war, the U.S. JUSPAO used all types of attribution in its effort to sway the populace in their favor, but given the U.S. weaker relative power, the preponderance of true attribution activities was assessed as minimally impactful at best and often unsuccessful. The JUSPAO's failure to properly use partner attribution also contributed to this overall failure. In contrast, the false and non-attribution influence activities employed by the MACV-SOG were relatively successful in achieving their objectives, and had they not ceased in the middle of the conflict, may have had more impact. This case also demonstrated the importance of understanding one's own relative power and the potential results of that failure in regards to the types of attribution.

This case supports Hypothesis 1, as MACV-SOG's false attribution activities appeared more effective than JUSPAO's true attribution and partner attribution activities, but this correlation is also weak, as much of JUSPAO's activities may have been more successful had they used partner attribution properly.

3. Crimea

Given the potential international backlash to aggressive Russian actions in Crimea, Russia had to maintain its involvement below a threshold that would generate backlash while also achieving their objectives. Following the Ukraine Revolution, which

was sparked by unwanted Russian influence in the government, Ukrainian society and the international community was not apathetic to additional Russian intervention. Given the diplomatic and political aspects of power surrounding the conflict in Crimea, Russia was in a position of weaker relative power. Realizing their weaker position, Russia used false and non-attributed influence activities to set conditions and execute operations in such a way that would not induce an international response. These activities were effective in gaining the support of local populations, while also allowing them to position ground forces, maneuver naval vessels, and infiltrate special forces throughout the peninsula with little to no effective response from the Ukrainian government or the international community.

This case strongly supports Hypothesis 1, as much of Russia's strategy in Crimea hinged on their ability to achieve their objectives without immediate consequence, something they were able to achieve despite their relative weakness in the situation.

B.   HYPOTHESIS 2

True attribution and attribution through a concurring partner force are more beneficial as operational success and a relative power advantage are achieved.

1.   World War II

As relative power shifted to the Allies, there is strong evidence for the increasing effectiveness of true attribution. This was used most effectively immediately prior to and during offensive combat operations, when relative power was about to, or had already shifted. True attribution activities, in particular radio broadcasts and leaflet drops, increased substantially in both volume and effectiveness in preparation for and during offensive operations. The number of surrendered German soldiers and post-war research provide strong evidence of true attribution's effectiveness during this shift. This relationship was also highlighted in situations where the enemy was surrounded or cutoff, as was demonstrated at Cherbourg. With relative power at its ultimate height in these situations, most appeals would intuitively be more effective, but it helps define the role of true attribution.

During this shift in power, the false attribution influence activities continued, but were overshadowed in volume and relative effectiveness by the true attribution activities of the PWD. The false attribution activities also continued to focus their operations on audiences farther from the front line, such as civilians in operation Cornflake, or forces not actively engaged in combat as in operations Apple and Ulysses. Also, the messages used in these false and non-attribution activities continued to contain a greater amount false information, likely because credibility could be protected with this type of attribution.

This case supports Hypothesis 2, as true attribution activities became the most abundant and effective form of attribution once relative power shifted to the Allies. An important caveat to this assessment is that the organizations tasked with conducting psychological warfare became increasingly operationally capable as relative power was gained, which likely also contributed to the volume and effectives of their activities.

2. Vietnam

We assessed that, given the circumstances surrounding the Vietnam war, the United States was never able to gain relative power. Therefore, we are unable to assess the effectiveness of influence activities relative to a shift in relative power. Despite this, there was another shift in attribution worth noting. After JUSPAO's frustration with requiring South Vietnamese approval on messaging products, they began to conduct messaging in their name without their approval. It was essentially partner attribution without concurrence, but this backfired, primarily due to poor execution. Without a local partner to review messages targeting a local audience, they failed to resonate. This failure in attribution was not only ineffective, but counterproductive to U.S. objectives.

This case is not able to provide support, neither positive or negative, for Hypothesis 2, as there was not a sufficient shift in relative power during the conflict. Additionally, the MACV-SOG was not permitted to conduct false attribution activities in North Vietnam after 1968 due to the peace negotiations with Hanoi. As such, during the last few years of the war, there is little evidence to compare types of attribution.

3. Crimea

As Russia began achieving operational success in Crimea through their false and non-attribution activities, their involvement on the peninsula became undeniable. More importantly, as their operations became more apparent to the international community it became clear there would be little to no response or intervention. As possible diplomatic and political risks decreased, their relative power in the conflict increased. This allowed Russia to slowly transition to true attribution, which was also necessary to achieve their objectives. Had Russia continued to use false or non-attribution, it would not have been effective for their new narrative of protecting ethnic Russians. By shifting to true attribution, Russia was able to justify their actions in Crimea by legitimizing their cause.

This case strongly supports Hypothesis 2, as the shift in attribution was consistent with the increase of relative power throughout the conflict. This shift was also integral to Russia achieving its objective in the conflict.

C.   OVERALL ASSESSMENT

In analyzing our three cases, we attempted to isolate the relationship between relative power and the types of attribution used in influence activities. Within each case, we identified that there is a correlation between these two variables. Overall, false attribution appeared more useful and effective when in a position of relative weakness, and as operational success and relative power were gained, we observed a shift to true attribution and its effectiveness. The failures in the Vietnam case also demonstrated the danger of misunderstanding relative power and its impact on selecting the wrong form of attribution.

The use of truth and lies also appeared as an important factor in the selection and effectiveness of attribution. When in a position of relative power, true messages supporting the objectives were easy to develop, and operational success and relative power provided credibility to the message. Essentially, they were more believable. This seems intuitive, but the more important observations are in a message's content when used with false and non-attribution. When in a position of relative weakness, some false messages were beneficial, as it was more challenging to form an effective, truthful

message. The use of false attribution with a false message also protected the legitimacy of the weaker side, so when operational success and relative power were achieved, their true messages with true attribution remained credible.

Despite identifying a correlation between relative power and the effectiveness of different types of attribution, the correlation is weak. First, as annotated in the first chapter, relative power can be determined through a number of factors. The subjectivity of making such a determination inherently makes relative power difficult to measure. For this study, we assessed and made a determination of relative power within the context of each conflict; however, a valid argument for an alternate determination can also be made regarding who had relative power and when. Second, and even more difficult to measure, is the effectiveness of influence activities themselves. The historical record provides a limited amount of hard data to determine the effectiveness of influence activities.

D.   UNEXPECTED FINDINGS

One unexpected and interesting observation throughout the cases was the correlation between attribution and the target audience's distance from combat or immediate danger. As the target audience was further from immediate danger—for example, soldiers on the front line compared to soldiers in garrison—the type of attribution shifted from true to false. In the WWII case, activities with false attribution typically targeted enemy civilian populations a significant distance from the front line, or enemy soldiers in the rear echelons. True attribution in the WWII case, with the exception of some radio broadcasts, focused operations on enemy forces directly in the path of military operations. In the Vietnam case, MACV-SOGs activities primarily focused on the North Vietnamese, while JUSPAO's activities focused on the populations and enemy soldier operating within South Vietnam. As Russia conducted only false attribution for much of the Crimea conflict, this case is not as clear, but it could be argued that their false attribution activities in the broader region and against the international community—audiences farther from the conflict—were more effective then against the Ukrainian soldiers they faced within Crimea itself.

E. THE WAY AHEAD AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In both U.S. joint and Army doctrine, each type of attribution is defined, but no guidance is provided on what conditions are best suited for each type. The only brief statement in doctrine on applying attribution implies that true attribution should be used whenever possible, but given our research, this does not always seem to be most appropriate or effective. The lack of information specific to attribution is also noticeable in the academic literature on psychological operations, which provides little guidance to influence professionals on when to use specific types of attribution. Given the perceived operational risks in psychological operations and the high levels of approval required within the DOD for MISO, MILDEC, and other influence activities, influence professionals should be better equipped to inform commanders and determine the most appropriate from of attribution.

To this end, we recommend that U.S. joint and Army doctrine do more than simply delineate the four types of attribution. Doctrine should include conditions best suited for using each type of attribution—relative power potentially being one of those conditions. While there are sound arguments for using only true attribution in U.S. influence activities, they are mostly contingent on the fact that the United States has relative power and does not need to use the "deceitful" methods inherent in false and non-attribution. The United States assumes it will be in a position of relative power, but this may not always be the case, and influence professionals need to be educated and prepared to use all forms of attribution for greater effect.

Looking beyond doctrine, operational commanders should also reassess the role of attribution. Historically, there has been a perception that activities using false or non-attribution are too risky, and failure would cause unrepairable damage to U.S. credibility. While there is merit in this perception, examples are emerging where countries such as Russia, China, and Iran have engaged in false or non-attribution activities with minimal consequences. This begs the question, should the United States reassess its discomfort with false and non-attributed influence activities? A reassessment may reveal strategic utility in its employment, or perhaps, a strategic risk in not using it.

There are also many variables besides relative power inherent in influence activities, and as mentioned before, one that is critically important is the use of truth and lies in messaging. It is difficult to discuss the use of attribution without its relationship to the use of truth and lies. The implications of their use together are worth further research. Throughout the cases, truthful information was typically associated with true attribution while false information was associated with false or non-attribution. This was not always the case and there are varying degrees of risk to be considered with each. An examination of their use in combination may yield useful information on both message content and types of attribution.

F.   CONCLUSION

For the DOD to remain capable of conducting influence activities, it must increase its understanding of the conditions best suited for each type of attribution. Currently, doctrine only states that the DOD should use true attribution whenever possible. We attempted to challenge that assertion and found that there are conditions when other forms of attribution are more effective in achieving influence objectives. This thesis specifically identified the condition of relative power and its correlations to attribution as an important factor. There are other conditions to be considered and improvements can be made in U.S. joint and Army doctrine to provide information and guidance to both commanders and influence professionals on this important aspect of influence.

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