

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

DEFENDING AMERICA'S CENTER OF GRAVITY

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ABSTRACT

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The National Defense Strategy states "America is a Nation at War", but unless the United States effectively employs strategic communications and secures the National Will, the ability to maximize military power to achieve national security objectives is jeopardized. Where once the military domination of land, sea, and air were sufficient to bring victory, warfare in the twenty-first century now requires information dominance to preserve the United States' Center of Gravity (COG). Using Colonel Harry A. Tomlin's COG construct, this project was able to demonstrate the United States' strategic vulnerability to achieving policy objectives as well as the corrosive effects of non-kinetic firepower from both foreign and domestic propaganda. As a result, unless the United States recognizes this vulnerability and develops a strategy nested in the National Security and National Defense strategies, we may win every tactical fight on the battlefield, but lose the strategic fight for the political objective that motivated the decision to go to war.

DEFENDING AMERICA'S CENTER OF GRAVITY

Globalization, the internet, and the 24-hour news cycle have created a modern battlefield that is no longer limited to a distant ocean or field of maneuver. This shrinking of the planet creates a phenomenon whereby conflicts that were formally private affairs between belligerents are now publicly displayed upon a global stage. As such, achieving strategic success is no longer limited to the mere science of linking tactical battlefield victories with operational objectives to convince a foe that further conflict is no longer worth the cost of the political gain. Rather today, leaders must combine that science with the art of information management to communicate battlefield effects to ensure the parameters of victory and defeat are clearly understood by not only the domestic audiences of the participants, but also to the global community acting as interested observers. Where once the military domination of land, sea, and air were sufficient to bring victory, warfare in the twenty-first century now requires information dominance to preserve the United States' Center of Gravity (COG). This COG is National Will and consists of the three critical capabilities: Legitimacy, Quality of Life, and Morale. Even given the United States' unquestioned superiority as both a military and economic power, the country can still suffer defeat through effective attacks on those three critical capabilities with the aim of toppling National Will. Unless the United States effectively employs strategic communications and secures the National Will, the ability to maximize military power to achieve national security objectives is jeopardized. In an era of globalization combined with the efficacy of attacks on the Center of Gravity, poor strategic communication and inadequate protection of the National Will is the United States Achilles' heel.

Globalization

As a precursor to understand and make the case for National Will, the context of the global environment must be understood. Globalization is fast becoming the preferred term for describing the current times. Just as the Depression, the Cold War Era, the Space Age, and the Roaring 20's are used to describe particular periods of history; Globalization describes the political, economic, and cultural atmosphere of today.¹ This period of Globalization essentially defines the context of the relationship between the nation state, global governance, the legitimacy of the use of power, and public policy debates at the local, national and super national levels.² These debates are essentially centered on two major themes of economics and politics.³ Although this paper discusses the political implications of globalization, it should not be forgotten that politics and economics remain inextricably linked. Economics has an affect on politics, just as the politics effects economics. The political aspects refer to national security,

international terrorism, projection of US military power, the role of the United Nations, and the liberal and constructivist theories of international relations.⁴ As a result, the ability to make progress in any international conflict or debate in either the political or economic realm requires an analysis of linking the economic and political dimensions of the issue with the legitimacy of political and institutional power. This linkage is essential, because without greater legitimacy at the supranational level, solving international issues becomes very difficult.⁵

The ideological triumph of a liberal democracy as the model of human political organization means that everywhere power is exercised requires the consent from the governed.⁶ Here lies the nesting of the era of globalization and National Will. In this modern era, maintaining or gaining legitimacy in the eyes of the international community is a critical component to National Will. When one considers that 121 nations are considered democracies (free or partly free), and those countries equate to 63% of all nations and 90% of the world's GDP, the concept of legitimacy to exercise the power of the people governed in those democracies is paramount.⁷

Center of Gravity

A key component of the premise of this paper is that National Will is the United States Center of Gravity (COG). This premise is not just assumed to be true, but rather is based on an analysis in accordance with the operational design process of campaign planning outlined in Draft Joint Pub 5-0 (Aug 2005). JP 5.0 defines the Center of Gravity as "Those characteristics, capabilities, or sources of power from which a military force derives its freedom of action, physical strength or will to fight."⁸ Carl von Clausewitz defined the center of gravity as "The hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends."⁹ Finally, Antulio Echevarria takes this concept a step further when he defines the center of gravity "...as a 'focal point'...it is the point where a certain centripetal force seems to exist, something that holds everything else together."¹⁰ Regardless of the preferred definition, all three sources make the point that the loss of center of gravity will result in certain defeat.

COL Harry A. Tomlin, an instructor at the US Army War College, outlines this process by using an analogy of a building. He views the center of gravity as the pediment or triangular gable roof of a temple, held up by multiple columns of critical capabilities. The defeat or destruction of multiple critical capabilities will result in the collapse of the center of gravity.¹¹

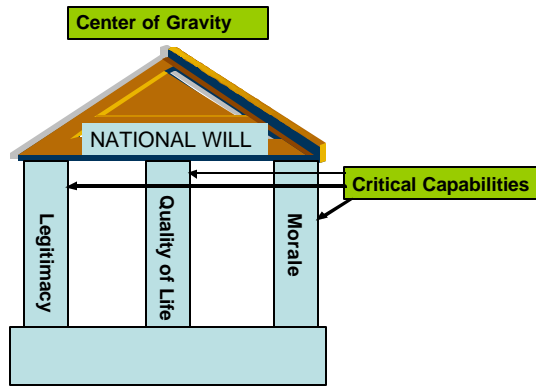


FIGURE 1 Borrowed from COL Tomlin's thesis (see end note 11)

Following his process of reverse engineering to determine the center of gravity, it becomes evident that the National Will of the United States is the “source of power from which the military derives its physical strength or will to fight, is the ‘hub of all power and movement’ or is the centripetal force that holds everything else together.”¹² The analysis also results in three critical capabilities that the National Will must retain or maintain in order to stay strong and viable. These are Legitimacy, Quality of Life, and Morale. In its purest form, armed conflict is nothing more than a race to defeat an opponents COG and force his strategic culmination while simultaneously defending one’s own COG to prevent culmination prior to achieving strategic political objectives.

Legitimacy

The concept of Legitimacy can trace its roots to the writings of Thomas Hobbes’ views when he wrote Leviathan, and argued his various aspects of the state of nature of man and his need to enter into a social contract in order to avoid chaos and live in a communal environment. Those views were compounded by the writings from John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. The views of Locke were increasingly influential on Thomas Jefferson. He used Locke’s modification of Hobbes’ theory while writing the Declaration of Independence. “... We hold these

truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among them are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..."¹³ It is the concept that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed that speaks directly to legitimacy.

Although legitimacy is oftentimes referred to only in the context of democracies, the idea applies equally to all forms of government. Even though it has a greater impact on democracies, since the consent of the governed is sought regularly through elections and public opinion polls, it is a concept that can bring early termination to all forms of non-democratic regimes as well. The fall of the Galtieri military junta in Argentina in 1982 or the violent overthrow of Ceausescu of Romania in 1989, are two examples where the Governments lost the consent of the people to remain in power. The history of the world contains hundreds of cases of revolutions, coups and other government changes based solely on a loss of legitimacy. Likewise, for new replacement governments to exist, they must also rapidly gain the consent of the governed and ensure their legitimacy for their long term survival.

The same principles that are at work in determining the consent of the governed within the confines of a national border or entity apply equally when extrapolated to the international community of nations in the era of globalization. In order for a nation, especially a super power like the United States to exercise its power within the world community, it must maintain an element of legitimacy in order to effectively apply the elements of power to achieve desired political objectives. This globalization concept of linking legitimacy with exercise of power runs contrary to the realist theory of international relations, and speaks more to the growing dominance of liberal, multilateralist and constructivist theoretical approaches.

Shashi Tharoor, the UN Undersecretary-General for Communications and Public Information, wrote in Foreign Affairs ,

Global challenges also require global solutions, and few indeed are the situations in which the United States or any other country can act completely alone... Equally important, however, is the need for legitimacy, and here again the UN has proven invaluable. The organization's role in legitimizing state action has been both its most cherished function and, in the United States, its most controversial. As the world's preeminent international organization, the UN embodies world opinion, or at least the opinion of the world's legally constituted states. When the UN Security Council passes a resolution, it is seen as speaking for (and in the interests of) humanity as a whole and in so doing it confers a legitimacy that is respected by the world's governments, and usually by their publics.¹⁴

Even President Bush echoed this liberal theory in his National Security Strategy:

We are also guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone. Alliances and multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations. The United States is committed to lasting institutions like the United Nations, The World Trade Organization, the Organization of American States, and NATO as well as other long-standing alliances¹⁵

Liberal international relations theory during the era of globalization where 63 percent of the nations are governed by democracies magnifies the importance of legitimacy in all aspects of the use of national power. Given that legitimacy is in the eyes of the beholder or in Lockean terms the consent of the governed, the capability of the United States to gain, and defend legitimacy is critical to maintain the friendly center of gravity: National Will.

Quality of Life

Quality of life is defined in many different ways. But for the purpose of this analysis, Quality of life is essentially the three canons found in the Declaration of Independence: Life, Liberty, and pursuit of happiness.¹⁶ Specifically, Quality of Life refers to “pursuit of happiness.” There are numerous indicators of Quality of Life, such as education, economy, personal income, health and safety, personal freedoms, and personal security.¹⁷ The vulnerability of this critical capability is the perceived cause for the loss of Quality of Life. The public will rebel or withdraw consent against the entity that is considered a threat to the Quality of Life.

National Will was never stronger in the United States than it was on September 11, 2001. Even though the attack on the World Trade Center had great impact on the nation's economy, personal security, and various freedoms, the American people were not shaken to surrender, but were rather motivated to defeat the perceived cause; in this case Islamic terrorism. Likewise, if a political action by the U.S. Government is perceived to be the cause of quality of life deprivation, then the same motivation to withdraw support and reverse that decision will occur.

Just as President Clinton argued during the 1992 presidential election, “It is the economy stupid,” the health of the U.S. economy (and the conventional wisdom as to who or what is to blame for a sagging economy) affects popular support for any governmental policy. A May 2004 CBS news poll touting falling approval ratings for President Bush, linked the difficulties in Iraq, with a down turning economy as the cause for falling political support of both the President and his policy to stay the course in Iraq:

...the last few weeks have provided no good news on the domestic front: Americans have lackluster expectations for the economy, and the new worry of

rising gas prices. The President's approval rating has dropped to a new low of 41 percent, and more than six in ten say the country is heading in the wrong direction¹⁸

The latest controversy concerning wiretapping of international phone calls is an attempt by critics to erode support for the war, by demonstrating that the wiretapping is an affront to Americans sense of privacy as a component of the pursuit of happiness. Ray McGovern, a former CIA analyst makes the argument that such intrusion into one's privacy is very dangerous and disconcerting.

If hundreds of calls and e-mails involving Americans are being intercepted each and every day, and juicy tidbits are learned about, say, prominent officials or other persons, there will be an almost irresistible temptation to make use of this information....The FBI's COINTELPRO activity's use of such information to harass and discredit Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is a particularly glaring example of such abuse. And [President Richard] Nixon's access to such information gave him the inside track on how to neutralize those on his long "enemies list."¹⁹

Morale

The Morale of the United States is tied to the confidence gained from a cost-benefit analysis of the cost of perceived deprivation against the benefit of obtaining the political objective. Clausewitz discussed this concept in his book *On War*, when he wrote, "Once the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced..."²⁰ Sun Tzu refers to Morale as the "Moral Law". That is a principle of harmony. The Moral Law causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler.²¹ Without the confidence of the American people, the President will find it nearly impossible to achieve any political objective. The loss of this confidence was perfectly exemplified by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. During a summer of high gas prices, and low confidence in the Government, President Carter attempted to bolster American morale and National Will to shoulder continued deprivation in pursuit of a larger good when he gave his infamous Malaise Speech. "The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our Nation."²² With this speech, President Carter accurately captured the feeling of the American people, but by leaving the impression that he was blaming the American people for the "crisis of confidence" he only succeeded in further lowering the morale of the American people, who withdrew their consent and elected President Reagan in a landslide victory.

A study by Duke University approached this issue by examining the relationship of wartime casualties and the effects on national morale and support for policies.

Our core argument is that the public's tolerance for the human costs of war is primarily shaped by the intersection of two crucial attitudes: beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of the war in the first place, and beliefs about the war's likely success. Both attitudes are important, and the impact of each depends upon the other. However, we find that beliefs about the likelihood of success matter most in determining the public's willingness to tolerate American military deaths in combat.²³

The belief in assured victory or the success of the endeavor bolsters the cost-benefit equation. Just as few support sacrifice for a lost cause, the study concludes that the willingness to support higher costs is acceptable so long as the benefit is viewed as just and attainable.

Center of Gravity Vulnerability

For the United States, the National Security Strategy, and more explicitly, the National Defense Strategy are designed to identify, attack and defeat potential enemy COG, but do nothing to address the defense of our own COG. By failing to address this vulnerability, an astute enemy can exploit this weakness in an attempt to defeat the United States by successfully attacking National Will as the United States' center of gravity. In fact, this is what is currently occurring in the war on terrorism. The enemy is following the Clausewitzian precept that not every war must be fought until one side collapses. Rather all that is needed to cause a foe to renounce his political objective and pursue peace is to make his expenditure of effort exceed the value of his political object.²⁴ This cost-benefit strategy speaks directly to the critical capability of Morale. By using a prolonged strategy of bleeding the United States National Will, the enemy in Iraq is attempting to win by attacking the center of gravity and forcing the United States to renounce their political objective. In this case, the political objective is to establish a democratic regime in Iraq, and the defeat of militant Islamic extremists.

A June 2005 Washington Post/ABC news poll discovered that for the first time, a majority of Americans believed that the Iraq war is no longer making the country safer.²⁵ When translated into Clausewitzian terms, the ABC/Washington Post poll essentially says that for the first time a majority of Americans believe that the expenditure of effort for the war is no longer worth the political objective for which the war was waged.²⁶ As a result, just as Clausewitz would predict, there is now a lot of domestic political pressure to pursue peace and withdraw from Iraq. The calls for withdrawal are irrespective of whether or not the political objective for pursuing the war in the first place was ever achieved, but are based solely on the perceived

cost-benefit analysis of the effort. As a strategy to defeat the U.S. forces, this is proving to be very effective and efficient.

As for legitimacy, the constant criticism of the United States by key nations undercuts the argument that the war is just, necessary and legitimate. A March 2004 report from the Pew Research Center showed that majorities in Germany, Turkey and France – and half of the British and Russians – believe the conflict in Iraq undermined the war on terrorism. At least half the respondents in eight other countries view the U.S. as less trustworthy as a consequence of the war.²⁷

As to how the war is affecting the quality of life of the average American, it is no coincidence that opponents of the Bush policy in Iraq attempt to link his policies with domestic issues. As an example, reporting in the San Francisco Chronicle, James Sterngold reported, “Put simply, critics say, the war is not making the United States safer and is harming U.S. taxpayers by saddling them with an enormous debt burden, since the war is being financed with deficit spending.”²⁸

These examples are everyday attacks on the three critical capabilities of the United States Center of Gravity. The attacks on the critical capabilities of Legitimacy, Morale, and Quality of life, all serve to eventually withdraw support for the policy. The January 6, 2006 CNN/Gallop tracking poll of the US decision to go to war provides a graphic picture of this issue.²⁹

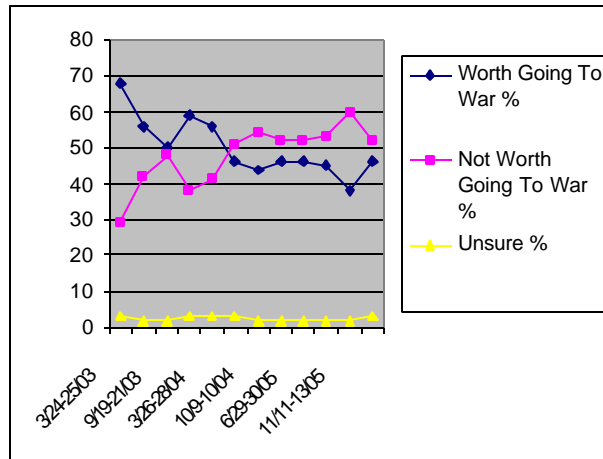


Figure 2

As the graph shows, support for the policy steadily fell as the cumulative weight of constant attacks on the COG started to erode support, resulting in the November 17, 2005 press release by Representative John Murtha (D-Pa) announcing his position for an immediate withdrawal of forces from Iraq. "It is evident that continued military action in Iraq is not in the best interest of the United States of America, the Iraqi people or the Persian Gulf Region. ...My plan calls: To immediately redeploy U.S. troops consistent with the safety of U.S. forces."³⁰

In a democracy where the government is accountable to the governed, a policy that is neither legally binding nor supported by the majority of the people will be impossible to sustain. Given that no adversary has yet to show an ability to defeat the U.S. on the battlefield, the wisest and most cost-effective strategy to terminate U.S. military operations is to erode the National Will, precipitate the voluntary withdrawal from the area of operations, and obtain a renouncement of the political policy which drove the use of military forces in the first place.

In recent history, this would not be the first time the United States has demonstrated vulnerability to an adversary's strategy to dissolve National Will. A loss of Will resulted in premature culmination and failure to achieve the desired political objectives in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia. Yet nowhere in the current version of the National Defense Strategy is there a concept to prevent this from occurring. In the National Defense Strategy, none of the eight desired attributes and capabilities addresses this weakness. Furthermore, in the section that discusses vulnerabilities, it fails to recognize the challenges evident in an open democracy, the susceptibility of attacks on National Will, and the debilitating impact erosion of National Will has on the ability to accomplish the strategic objectives. Ironically, the National Defense Strategy recognizes the need to counter ideological support for terrorism in order to erode popular and political support for the terrorist, but it makes no such mention explicitly or implicitly for a need to defend the United States popular support.

The National Military Strategy fails no better in its plan to recognize, defend, or mitigate this vulnerability. Despite the three buzz words to protect, prevent and prevail, the strategy mentions nothing about protecting National Will, or preventing attacks against the National Will. Although it includes the objective to secure the United States from direct attack, its implication is only to secure from direct kinetic attack. Even though the effects of propaganda, and non kinetic attacks at all levels of war are a significant tenet of effects based operations and planning, the National Military Strategy fails to recognize the possibility or plausibility that the main vulnerability to achieving national military objectives is not from kinetic parries to overt military force, but rather from non kinetic erosion of National Will.

Information is Power

The main attacks against the United States' critical capabilities and center of gravity comes from non-kinetic application of power. Just as economic warfare (sanctions) can stunt military capability, adversaries have learned that through the use of diplomatic and information power they can influence the behavior of an economic and military superpower. Primarily through the use of information operations, adversaries are able to attack the three critical capabilities of the United States and force a collapse of the COG and the loss of National Will. Without National Will, (the hub of all power) a democracy cannot use military power in pursuit of political objectives.

In all three of the instances of the critical capabilities and their influence on National Will, it requires strategic evaluation of the information received. Due to the impact of global communications, internet and 24-hour news cycles, the sources of information are plentiful. The Department of Defense definition of Information is "facts, data, or instructions in any medium or form. The meaning that a human assigns to data by means of the known conventions used in their representations."³¹ The American heritage dictionary defines information as "knowledge derived from study, experience, or instruction."³² In both of these definitions the key element is the implied task of processing the given data. Whether that processing is the meaning that a human assigns to the data, or if it is a derivative of study, experience, or instruction, there is none-the-less a process by which the data is received and then interpreted by the human brain. This process is outlined in Field Manual (FM)100-6 information operations.

The manual does well to clarify the relationships between the layers of the pyramid. Processing, defined as 'placing (data) into a situational context,' produces information. Through cognition, knowledge is derived from information. Cognition is defined as a mental process which assesses and ultimately grants acceptance to information that is found to be factual. Finally judgment is applied to give knowledge relevance within a specific situational context and results in understanding.³³

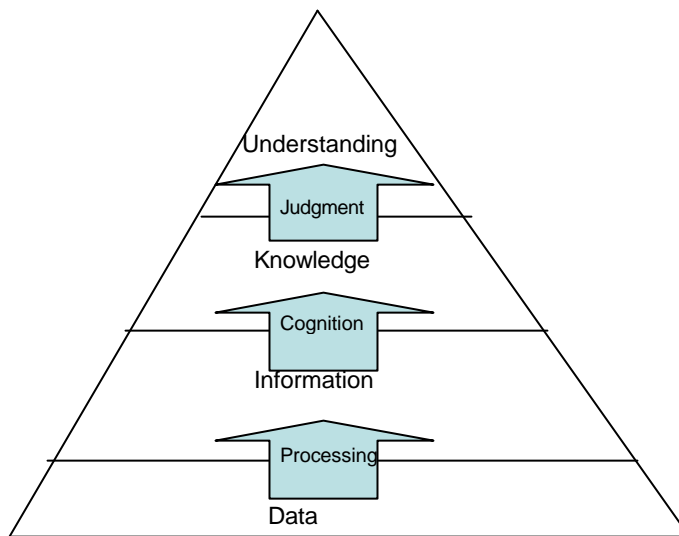


Figure 3 Cognitive Hierarchy³⁴

The piece of data is essentially irrelevant in the grand context. It is the processing mechanism and the context through which the data flows that is ultimately critical when discussing information as it relates to National Will. The concept of information warfare therefore should not focus on the data, but rather on the process by which an individual analyzes that data in order to attain knowledge and understanding.

The strategic communication program is the method by which the government can aid in the processing of the information received. According to Joint Publication (JP) 3-13, a strategic communications plan should integrate and coordinate US government themes and messages that advance U.S. interests as well as inform and influence foreign audiences.³⁵ Just as any commander develops measures of effectiveness to track the effects of his operational and strategic operations, the same must occur in respect to the execution of the strategic communications plan. Equally important, just as a commander must measure the effectiveness of the ground or air campaign against his adversary's COG, he must also constantly measure the effectiveness of his strategic communication campaign plan to parry any threat to his strategic COG. As a component to his Critical Command Information Requirements (CCIR), any threat to or weakness of his strategic COG should be a key element of his Critical Friendly Force Information.

Propaganda

Although there are negative connotations associated with the concept of propaganda, the reality is that propaganda is an integral part of every-day life. It is only through the misuse of propaganda that one achieves a more sinister outcome. As a tool it is analogous to a hunting rifle. When used properly it can achieve great benefits (provide food for the family), but when used inappropriately it can cause a revolution. In its purest form, propaganda is nothing more than information used to persuade. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as advertising, promotion, publicity, agitprop, disinformation, newspeak, rumors, and lies.³⁶ The fact that it can be used in both a positive and negative fashion is why the word has of late taken on a more negative connotation. The four elements of Propaganda are:

- **Repetition** - owing to the infantile limitations of collective memory, a message must be continuously propagated in order to take hold within the collective consciousness.³⁷
- **Simplicity** - The message must be designed in such a way that it appeals to or is quickly understood by the lowest common intellectual denominator of the collective. This is not only true because of the vast ignorance of the masses, but also because the collective attention span is virtually nonexistent. We now live in a world of sound-bite discourse.³⁸
- **Imagery** - The most powerful propaganda is embedded within appealing imagery. This imagery could be pictorial or descriptive. This is why movies and music are such potent forms of propaganda.³⁹
- **Sentiment** - The message must contain as little detail as possible, and instead be designed in such a way that it appeals to some strong emotion or sentiment—such as sex or sympathy.

The exclusion of detail allows for the quicker processing of the message, while the underlying sentiment reinforces it.⁴⁰

All four of these elements aid in the cognitive hierarchy pyramid of taking a piece of data and processing it in order to achieve understanding. This process occurs daily whether it is from watching television commercials, reading newspaper editorials, listening to political speeches, or briefings from military commanders.

Although the media attempts to claim ownership as the arbiter of objective information dissemination, based on their protection in the first amendment to the Constitution, the reality is they are only one source of propaganda that seeks to influence National Will on a daily basis. When the Bush Administration openly challenged this perceived supremacy of the media by allowing the Military to pay Iraqi journalists to write news stories that were favorable to military

operations in Iraq, the media protested the action with charges of propaganda. "If the "truth" comes only after secret payments, then it isn't much truth at all...,"⁴¹ or "Benjamin Franklin said that if he had to choose between the existence of government and the existence of fair journalism, he would certainly choose the latter."⁴² Senator John McCain countered these media assertions when asked about this issue on Meet the Press by moderator Tim Russert, McCain said, "If the stories were accurate, if that's the way to get stories, I'm not terribly offended by it."⁴³

The reality is that no single entity is the sole proprietor of information or propaganda. The trepidation by the media that by allowing the military to plant stories somehow represented a loss of legitimacy for the information ignored the point by Senator McCain. McCain was not concerned about the source of the information, but rather was focused on the accuracy. The media, on the other hand believes the messenger is the key variable for determining veracity. Unfortunately the track record of a Media monopoly is not very distinguished in regards to being devoid of inaccurate propaganda. "After years spent researching the background and events related to world conflict some disturbing trends have emerged - a media predilection for partial truth, selective memory and strategic omissions."⁴⁴

A strategic communications program therefore must take into consideration the duality of propaganda and aggressively counter the attacks against the critical capabilities of Legitimacy, Quality of Life and Morale. An effective use of this strategy occurred when President Bush responded to Representative Murtha's call for immediate withdrawal, and polling results which suggested the tipping point for the loss of National Will was rapidly approaching by giving a series of speeches to persuade the American people that the benefit of the struggle in Iraq was worth more than the accumulated costs, and that victory was still plausible. His speech to the Midshipmen at Annapolis was designed to counter a decrease in Morale.

Some are calling for a deadline for withdrawal. Many advocating an artificial timetable for withdrawing our troops are sincere -- but I believe they're sincerely wrong. Pulling our troops out before they've achieved their purpose is not a plan for victory. As Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman said recently, setting an artificial timetable would discourage our troops because it seems to be heading for the door. It will encourage the terrorists; it will confuse the Iraqi people.⁴⁵

His effectiveness at countering the attacks against the strategic COG was noted by an immediate eight percentage point surge in support for his policies.⁴⁶

Defending National Will

The National Security Strategy, building upon the words from President Bush's speech to West Point on June 1 2002 states, "Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities."⁴⁷ The National Security Strategy writes that "in pursuit of our goals, our first imperative is to clarify what we stand for..."⁴⁸ The only way to accomplish that goal, and persuade the American people that what we stand for is worth the expenditure of effort to achieve those ideals, is through a robust information (strategic communications) program that defends the National Will against those adversaries who share a different vision.

The National Defense Strategy requires revision to fully capture this concept. It needs a fifth point of "How We Accomplish Our Objectives." Not only does the United States need to assure, dissuade, deter, and defeat, but the United States must also communicate. Add "Communicate Strength of Will" to the list. Further define this concept as the need to provide a strategic communications campaign that exposes the threats from adversaries and reassures the American public that victory is inevitable. Just as President Bush attempted in his speech at Annapolis, the National Defense Strategy should include a campaign to ensure strength of National Will. As part of effects based operational and strategic planning, the Defense Strategy needs to consider the effects of an enemy information or strategic communications plan that attacks American National Will.

This plan must also take into consideration opposition groups within the country that seek to leverage any loss of Quality of life and Morale for political advantage in the next election cycle. This is not meant to construe that political opposition groups are enemies of the state, but it bears recognition that a message marriage of convenience occurs between legitimate political groups opposed to the current administration, as well as foreign adversaries opposed to the current administration's political objectives. Osama Bin Laden stated, "...Bush is still exercising confusion and misleading you and not telling you the true reason."⁴⁹ Now compare this to Senator John Kerry's comments. "I've never used that word [Lied]," Kerry said. "I've said they [Bush Administration] misled America. . . . They are still misleading America."⁵⁰

The administration should not be afraid of charges of propaganda by aggressively pursuing goals that seek to influence the American people to support the national policy for which military force was used. As Senator McCain concluded, there is nothing sinister about propaganda that is accurate.⁵¹ After all, propaganda is nothing more than the dissemination of information in order to persuade.⁵²

Conclusion

As an unquestioned superpower that is militarily dominant on land, air, and sea, the United States still has an Achilles' heel that provides any potential adversary a window of opportunity. The strategic center of gravity and the three critical capabilities are exposed and susceptible to the effects of non kinetic firepower from both foreign and domestic propaganda. The era of globalization combined with the internet and 24-hour news cycle provide the perfect delivery vehicle for these asymmetric attacks. Unless the United States recognizes this vulnerability and develops a strategy nested in the National Security and National Defense strategies, we may win every tactical fight on the battlefield, but lose the strategic fight for the political objective that motivated the decision to go to war. At the strategic level, the art of achieving the policy through the science of applying military force needs to remember what Sun Tzu wrote, ". . . to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."⁵³ As long as National Will remains the United States' strategic center of gravity supported by the three critical capabilities of Legitimacy, Quality of Life and Morale, the successful use of strategic communications to defend that COG is the ultimate art of war.

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