Year of the Adversary: Russia
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About our Cover Design: The IO Sphere cover is symbolic of the importance of Information Operations in the global projection of national power. The cover colors are a rotation of the U.S. military service colors, as well as, the color purple to symbolize the joint nature of Information Operations.
U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers perform a mission brief to local militia roleplayers before conducting a joint training exercise in Louisiana, March 14.
Welcome to another edition of the IO Sphere. Over the past year, there has been a significant increase in hostilities throughout the world. During 2014 there was the Russian annexation of the Crimea followed by a civil war in the Ukraine. We also saw the rise of the Islamic State which took control of significant territory in both Syria and Iraq. An Iranian-supported militia recently toppled the government of Yemen and that country is heading toward civil war with Al Qaida in the Arab Peninsula, battling the Shi’ite militia in that country. Violence is also on the increase in North Africa with attacks in Libya and Tunisia.

Due to the unrest throughout the world, I felt this year we would have an overarching theme: The Year of the Adversary. From this overarching theme we will be focusing on different hot spots with each issue. This issue will focus on Russia.

The key for Russian leadership is the preservation of Russia and the increase of Russian influence. The breakup of the Soviet Union was a heavy blow to Russian prestige. This event left Russia barely a regional power after a long period of being a global super power. The blow to their security posture, however, was mitigated for a long time as they still maintained strong relations with border nations. Over time these relationships started to get weaker which left Russia in a position of feeling their security, and therefore their very existence, was in danger.

Russia presents an interesting case. As pointed out in the article, “The Reach of the Bear: Russian Information Operations,” “There is a mix of inferiority complex, narcissistic injury, and reactive grandiosity in Russian politics that fuels its aggression under the guise of ‘defense’ and aid to its mistreated ethnic compatriots.” This belief is, to some extent, justified by their history of being invaded by various aggressors. The use of the border nations to create a buffer zone to prevent invasion of Mother Russia is very important to the Russian mind. As such, the “betrayal” by the Ukraine in seeking closer relations with the west left Russia feeling they needed tighter control of the border nations in order to ensure that buffer zone.

The US and Western Europe have made some moves to counter Russian aggression. The primary vehicle used has been targeted sanctions against Russian leaders and businesses with close ties to the government. In addition to these sanctions, the current oil glut has hurt the Russian economy by lowering the price of the main export — energy. While this hasn’t had an immediate impact on curbing the aggressive attitude, it is hoped that it will in the long term.

In the short term the use of information operations to counter Russian information warfare may be our best weapon. Russia is a great believer in information warfare and their targets are both internal and external. Internally, they seek to maintain support through economic hardship by showing themselves and ethnic Russians in other border countries as the victims of western aggression. The people of Russia have little problem seeing themselves as a victim and, therefore, are more willing to accept hardship — at least for now.

In addition to the article mentioned above, we have two other articles focused on Russia: “Potemkin Conservatism. An ideological tool of the Kremlin,” which looks at the Russian government’s use of conservative ideology as a means of maintaining control and “Putin, Clausewitz, and Ukraine,” which looks at the Kremlin’s use of limited war.

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Potemkin Conservatism. An ideological tool of the Kremlin

by

Witold Rodkiewicz, Jadwiga Rogoża

Translated by: Jim Todd

**Editor’s Note:** The following article was originally posted in the March 2015 issue of *Point of View* published by the Polish Centre for Eastern Studies (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich found at http://www.osw.waw.pl/en) and translated by Jim Todd. This article looks at the current conservative ideology that has become the Kremlin’s new political strategy. While this strategy has brought about short-term benefits to the regime, it may prove counterproductive in the longer term. This article is reprinted with permission from the publisher.

**Key Points**

1. The conservative ideology which has predominated in official discourse in Russia since 2011 has become the ideological foundation of the Kremlin’s new political strategy that may be described as “the conservative project.” Its main objective is to stabilize the regime, which felt challenged by the demands for liberalization coming from the new middle class and part of the business and administrative elite. These demands, which are incompatible with Putin’s political regime, have been rejected by the Kremlin, and their supporters have been subjected to repression.

The ruling establishment has thus demonstrated that it expressly rules out any attempt to carry out a modernization based on Western models. The Kremlin has indicated the existence of a fundamental discrepancy between Russia and contemporary Western civilization, in order to create an ideological counterweight to liberalism and to rule out the transplantation of Western political models into Russia. The Kremlin has also used this argument to justify Russian great power aspirations, implying the right to shape the world order, to legitimate its confrontation with the “degenerate” West, and to facilitate its search for allies.

2. Apart from the rhetoric, the Kremlin’s “conservative project” includes a number of political and legislative measures aimed at strengthening the president’s position, subordinating business and administrative elites, and at mobilizing public support. An important element of this “project” is the so-called “nationalization of the elite,” which entails disciplining members of the state administration and business and increasing their economic burdens. In foreign policy, the project envisages the reintegration of the post-Soviet space under the aegis of Moscow, as evidenced by the annexation of Crimea and the attempt to establish a pro-Russian quasi-state of “Novorossiya” on the territory of Ukraine.

3. The Kremlin is approaching this conservative ideology purely instrumentally, using it to create an ideological counterweight to its opponents who call for liberal reform of the current system of government. Many of the laws enacted under the banner of “conservatism” are not intended to create a social order consistent with conservative assumptions; in fact, the Kremlin has not formulated a positive vision for an ultimate social model based on these values. The purpose of these laws is to strike at the government’s opponents. Moreover, the actual conduct of the members of the ruling camp contradicts the values they profess, considering their extreme materialism and ostentatious consumerism and their symbiotic economic ties with the West.

4. For the time being, the implementation of the “conservative project” has brought the authorities some ad hoc benefits, neutralizing the public’s discontent with the Kremlin’s policy and redirecting its frustration against the West. But in the longer term, the project’s effectiveness as a tool for social mobilization behind the government will be limited. The so-called “nationalization of the elite” may prove especially counterproductive because it amplifies their discontent and anxiety, which over time will contribute to the destabilization of the regime. On the international stage, the effectiveness of the “conservative project” is limited in the short term, because it antagonizes the Western political establishment and mobilizes it to resist Russia’s aggressive policy. However, it may prove more effective in the long run, if the European political scene is significantly reshuffled; a harbinger of this is the ongoing rise in support for populist and Eurosceptic parties in national elections and the European Parliament.

**Introduction**

At the beginning of his third presidential term, Vladimir Putin openly declared that he saw “conservative values” as an ideological signpost for his policies. The Kremlin presented its own interpretation of Russian political traditions and social model as representing “conservative values.” According to this line of reasoning, the Russian political tradition requires that the state authority be strong, centralized and hierarchic, and vested in a charismatic leader whose rule bears a special, quasi-sacred character, despite the formal maintenance of democratic (electoral) mechanisms of legitimacy. In the Kremlin’s interpretation, the Russian social model consists of the traditional family pattern (especially large families), a passive role for society in the political processes, and the presence of organized religion in the public life (with particular emphasis on the role of the Russian Orthodox Church) as a source of moral principles.

However, an analysis of the Kremlin’s policy leads to the conclusion that it is treating this conservative ideology in
a purely instrumental manner. The resort to conservatism in Russia. While it is the Kremlin’s genuine intention to maintain a strong, centralized state power, the conservative social and moral rhetoric is in fact being used as just another “political technology,” i.e. a tool for manipulating public opinion, both domestically and abroad. Using this ideology does not mean that the current ruling camp really adheres to conservative values, or that it has a long-term program to implement them. We are in fact dealing with another kind of “Potemkin village,” the aim of which is to divert public attention from Russia’s real socio-political and economic problems, and to provide the authorities with arguments to implement repressive internal policies and an anti-Western foreign policy.

I. THE ROOTS OF THE KREMLIN’S “CONSERVATIVE PROJECT”

Although conservative ideology has predominated in the Kremlin’s rhetoric for several years, it has not been yet presented as a formal and comprehensive concept. Its contents can be reconstructed only on the basis of Vladimir Putin’s policy statements. References to conservative ideology appeared in Putin’s speeches and texts during his campaign before the 2012 presidential elections. Therein he emphasized the importance of “traditional values,” which according to him include: a strong state power, political stability, a hierarchical social order, patriotism and a traditional family model. This has spurred Kremlin experts and officials to declare themselves supporters of the conservative line, and to develop conservative themes in their publications and speeches. As a result, conservatism has come to dominate the ruling camp’s ideological discourse, and begun to shape the official vision of Russia’s domestic governance and international order.

The conservative threads emerged for the first time in January 2012, in Putin’s pre-election article “Russia is concentrating.” In this article, Putin highlights the need to maintain political stability, and argues that radical changes are detrimental to the successful development of countries and societies. He also emphasizes that respect for a strong state is encoded in Russian culture, and that fidelity to traditional values and religions is a prerequisite for the consolidation of society.

Conservative themes appeared clearly and unambiguously in Putin’s addresses to parliament in 2012 and 2013, as well as in his speech at a meeting of the Valdai Club in 2013. The main theme of his December 2012 address was the need to return to “traditional values”—the President declared that at the beginning of the twenty-first century Russia had faced a “crisis of values,” and that Russian society lacked “spiritual ties” (духовные скрепы).

Putin presented himself explicitly as a conservative for the first time in his 2013 address to parliament. Citing the philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev, he stated that “the point of conservatism is not that it prevents movement forward and upward, but that it prevents movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state.” Putin stressed that Russia has assumed the position of a defender of traditional values which for thousands of years have formed the spiritual and moral underpinnings of civilizations and nations: the traditional family, human life, religious and spiritual life, the values of humanism and global diversity. According to Putin, these values have been rejected by the West, which he accused of not just revising moral standards and blurring national and cultural identities, but even of an equating of good with evil. Such practices, Putin argued, undermine the democratic nature of the Western countries because they are imposed against the will of the majority of their peoples. Moreover, in his opinion, the Western elites are trying to impose these liberal values on both Western and non-Western societies. In his opinion, such “attempts to impose a supposedly progressive model of development will lead to regression, barbarism and bloodshed.” Putin stressed that Russia is not alone in defending traditional values: “We know that the number of people who support us around the world is growing.”

Putin enlarged on themes of national identity and Christian values in a speech to the Valdai Club forum in 2013. He argued that in the modern world, success depends not only on military capabilities, but primarily on the intellectual, spiritual and moral accomplishments of the nation. Putin declared that Russia’s mission is to defend the values derived from Christianity and other world religions, and from the moral standards which have been developed over millennia, which are indispensable for the preservation of human dignity. He called for the moral, intellectual and physical development of the human being to be recognized as the chief aim of the Russian government’s philosophy. Putin highlighted patriotism, civic responsibility, solidarity, and identification with Russian national interests as defined by the Kremlin as the foundations for the formation of civic identity among Russians. He described Russia as a state-civilization, the core of which is the ethnic Russian nation, and whose bonds are the Russian language and culture, the Orthodox religion and the other traditional religions of Russia (Islam, Judaism, Buddhism).

At the same time, Putin delivered a sharp criticism of Western civilization, which is “actually rejecting its roots. They are denying moral principles and all traditional identities: national, cultural, religious and even sexual. They are implementing policies that equate large families with same-sex partnerships, belief in God with the belief in Satan. And people are aggressively trying to export this model all over the world. Without the values embedded in Christianity and other world religions, without the standards of morality that have taken shape over millennia, people will inevitably lose their human dignity. We consider it natural and right to defend these values.”

Putin also rejected what he described as “the so-called tolerance, neutered and barren,” being enforced by the West not only upon Russia but upon the whole world. In his opinion such actions, together with attempts to resuscitate the unipolar model of the world, will reduce sovereign states to the role of vassals.

II. THE GENESIS OF THE KREMLIN’S “CONSERVATIVE PROJECT”

Conservative themes are not entirely new in the Kremlin’s ideological arsenal. They were first expressed when Putin came to power at the turn of 2000; and then after 2003, in response to the wave of “color revolutions” in the post-Soviet area. At that time, however, they did not dominate the Kremlin’s ideological message, but rather coexisted alongside other ideological currents. It was only after Putin’s return to the presidency in May 2012 that the references to conservative, traditional values came to dominate the Kremlin’s official narrative, and became the main ideological foundation of government policy.
When deciding on the use of conservatism for political purposes, Putin invoked a radical version of the concept which had previously existed on the margins of Russian political and intellectual life. This version was extremely anti-Western and anti-liberal, and called for the revival of the empire. These ideas have been developed and promoted since the early 1990s by writers and journalists like Aleksandr Dugin, Aleksandr Prokhanov, Mikhail Leontyev, Nikolai Starikov, Natalia Narochitnitskaya, and also by the Russian Orthodox Archimandrite Tikhon (lay name Georgy Shevkunov), who is believed to be Putin’s personal confessor. The Kremlin began to attract and consolidate these hitherto dispersed and fragmented conservative circles, thus granting them greater political weight. As a result, the nationalist-conservative discourse – which until now had been peripheral in public debate in Russia – became dominant.

The Kremlin chose to use conservative ideology in reaction to the changing socio-political situation in Russia. In the last decade, as a result of economic growth and the spread of information technologies (especially the Internet), Russian society has developed an urban middle class, which is characterized not only by higher living standards, but also by a political culture different from that of the post-Soviet period. In this group, demands have arisen for systemic reforms, including economic liberalization and political pluralism, as well as the reduction of state interference in social life and space for grassroots civic initiatives. Putin’s return to the Kremlin shattered these groups’ hopes of fulfilling their aspirations. This resulted in a build-up of discontent within this class, which took the form of street protests and a number of grassroots initiatives that represented mechanisms for holding the government accountable to the public (including the independent observation of elections). In response, the ruling camp used force to suppress the protests, growing civic aspirations and activities. This meant that it has definitely abandoned any attempts to implement modernization based on the Western model.

Another reason why Putin raised the banner of conservatism was his belief that the susceptibility of part of the population to liberal ideas stems from an ideological void which arose in the aftermath of the discrediting and collapse of communism. Therefore, the authorities believed it necessary to present society with an attractive ideological alternative that could fill this void, and thus prevent the spread of liberal attitudes and beliefs. This offer was aimed primarily at Putin’s traditional social base – the poor inhabitants of the provinces, employed in the public sector, industry and agriculture.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KREMLIN’S “CONSERVATISM”

A characteristic feature of the Kremlin’s “conservatism” is the predominance of negative over positive assumptions. In this ideology, the phenomena and values that Russia should be tackling are more distinctly and sharply defined, while its positive agenda remains vague and inchoate. This ideology is primarily opposed to the political, social and cultural models of the modern West. Its positive layer draws upon Russia’s traditional political and social model, which according to the authorities is not merely desirable, but simply immanent for Russia.

The Kremlin’s ideology preaches that Russia and the modern West represent fundamentally discrepant civilizations. These discrepancies are a consequence of the West’s abandonment of the values of Christian civilization and its rejection of traditionally understood identities – of nation, culture, religion, gender, and even of the distinction between good and evil. The Kremlin positions Russia as a defender and mainstay of European civilization. At the same time, by highlighting the divergence between Russia and contemporary Western civilization, the Kremlin intends to rule out any chance of Western political models being adopted in Russia. Moreover, this ideology assumes that the way to solve the problems plaguing Russia lies not in systemic reforms, but in the moral and spiritual healing of society.

On the positive side, the Kremlin’s ideology advocates maintaining political and social stability, the revival of national identity and the cultivation of patriotism, a return to the traditional model of the family, state paternalism and social corporatism. In particular this ideology, drawing on its own interpretation of the Russian political tradition, proclaims the need to maintain a strong, hierarchical and centralized state power in Russia. The epitome of this should be a charismatic leader, whose authority has a special, quasi-sacred character, despite the formal maintenance of democratic (electoral) mechanisms of its legitimacy.

This ideology presents society (the people) as being rooted in Russian tradition and naturally wedded to conservative values. It calls for the cultivation of the traditional model of a large family with many children, as well as the reinstatement of the Orthodox Church (and other traditional religions) as a source of moral principles in social and public life. The Kremlin’s “conservatism” contrasts the Russian people with the elites; the latter – due to their involvement in international economic relations in a globalized world, and their interests related to this – are presented as vulnerable to external geopolitical pressures and to Western ideological influence. The government thus appeals to genuine social sentiments which combine anti-elitism, anti-Americanism and xenophobia. At the same time, in the Kremlin’s vision of the model of the state, the role of society (the people) is that of a subject, limited to passive participation in the processes initiated by the authorities.

IV. THE “CONSERVATIVE PROJECT” IN DOMESTIC POLITICS

The Kremlin’s reaction to the political and social challenges facing it has not been limited to the ideological sphere. Invoking conservative values, the Kremlin has taken a number of steps aimed at consolidating the regime. These steps have followed a consistent pattern suggesting that the Kremlin has devised and is implementing an overarching political strategy that can be described as “the conservative project.” It should be noted, however, that the authorities have never presented a comprehensive concept of this “project,” for example in the form of a formal program or a publicly announced strategy.

As part of this project, the Kremlin has taken comprehensive counter-reforming measures, leading to the further centralization of power; restricting political activity and curbing civil rights; it intensified harassment of the opposition; taken steps to discipline the administrative and business elites; reinforced the repressive apparatus and expanded its prerogatives. Although the Kremlin had resorted to repression against the opposition before, under the banner of the “conservative project” it has extended them beyond the political sphere, and applied to people who are not direct political opponents of the regime. The regime has now penalized any behaviors and attitudes that go beyond the traditional (as the Kremlin defines it) canon of lifestyle and worldview (as exemplified, among others,
by the prison sentences handed down to the members of Pussy Riot. The broadly defined opposition has also been subjected to a propaganda campaign invoking conservative values; this has equated any criticism of the authoritarian system of government with opposition to Russia as such, or even with treason. It has also strove to discredit the opposition by arguing that liberal democratic ideology that it proclaims will lead naturally and inevitably to the spread of non-traditional lifestyles in society, as allegedly evidenced by the transformation of everyday customs in the West. As part of the “conservative project,” the Kremlin has also used institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church to wage its propaganda against the liberal opposition. Finally, one of the government’s most effective tactics has been to brand the opposition of a large part of liberal circles to the annexation of Crimea as being anti-Russian and unpatriotic (Putin has described opponents of the annexation as “national traitors”) – which puts liberals beyond the pale of official political competition.

An important element of the “conservative project” is the disciplining measures taken by the authorities against the Russian elite, a process which has become known as “nationalization of the elites.” These measures were a reaction to the skepticism Putin had faced from part of the elite upon his return to the Kremlin in 2012. In response, the presidential administration has moved to strengthen the mechanisms which render the elite dependent on the Kremlin and enforce obedience to the president. Kremlin propaganda pictured the elites’ contacts and business ties with the West as an instrument of their subordination to foreign political centers, which undermined their loyalty to Moscow. At the Kremlin’s initiative, parliament has adopted a series of laws which have tightened the presidential administration’s supervision of the foreign assets and business activities of Russian officials and employees of state corporations. They have been banned from owning foreign bank accounts and obligated to disclose the sources of funds for purchase of properties abroad. They were also obliged to declare any second (and subsequent) citizenships. The Kremlin has created a special register of these two groups’ assets, including data on financial transactions.

One of the “project’s” goals is to demonstrate that Putin’s policies enjoy the support of the majority of the general public, and that the people are opposed to the idea of liberal reforms. Drawing on the conservative ideology, the project contrasts the “corrupt” elites and “demoralized” middle class with the “ordinary people,” who allegedly remain faithful to traditional values, and are therefore not susceptible to anti-Putin slogans. According to the Kremlin, the group of the “ordinary people” includes the inhabitants of provincial towns and rural areas, with lower standards of living, as well as employees of the public sector and industrial plants. On the basis of this group, in 2011 the Kremlin created the All-Russia Popular Front, which simulates a genuine social movement, although in reality it is a centrally-controlled structure managed by Kremlin officials. This Front, professing a conservative ideology, was intended to serve as a counterweight to both the liberal protest movement and to Putin’s own political base, the United Russia party, which was losing public support and undergoing internal erosion at the time.

V. “CONSERVATISM” AS AN INSTRUMENT OF FOREIGN POLICY

Putin’s “conservatism” was devised not only with a Russian audience in mind, but also with the intention of using it as a tool of foreign policy. Both Putin and the Russian ruling elite believe that the current international situation is characterized by growing competition between the great powers. In their view, this is increasingly acquiring a civilizational dimension, involving a choice between alternative paths of development and different socio-political models. The regime’s leading representatives have openly declared that the West, particularly the United States, is seeking to impose Western values on Russia in order to create favorable conditions for the anti-system opposition, which they will subsequently use to overthrow the current government in Russia (as part of a policy of “color revolutions”). So in the eyes of the Kremlin, the ideological sphere has become an important part of international competition. The Kremlin considers it essential to formulate an attractive ideological message in order to legitimize Russia’s aspirations to the role of a great power which influences the shape of the global international order. This message is also meant to increase Russia’s attractiveness as the patron of those political forces that are opposed to Western liberalism (especially in its post-modern form) as well as to the hegemony of the US and the EU.

This offer is a conservative ideology which proclaims the need to observe traditional values, based on the teachings of the world’s great religions, and to preserve national identities, as well as political and social stability. At the same time, Russian diplomacy and propaganda has been systematically building and promoting a narrative in which the world is threatened on one hand by religious and political radicalism (Islamists, fascists, nationalists), and on the other by the postmodern liberalism of the West, behind which lies the American pursuit of world hegemony. In this narrative, Russia is presented as the main defender of a stable international order, traditional state sovereignty, and civilizational and political pluralism throughout the world.

This conservative ideological (and political) offer is aimed at those sections of the European elite which are Euro sceptic, anti-American and hostile to globalization, and which defend traditional conservative Christian values. Such tendencies can be found both on the right (the French National Front and the conservative Gaulists, Hungarian Jobbik, the German AfD) as well as on the left (post-communist and communist parties in Europe, including the German Die Linke and the Greek Syriza). The Kremlin’s “conservative” ideology is also intended to appeal to the so-called “silent majority,” that is, “average” EU citizens, who (in the opinion of the Kremlin’s experts) are disillusioned with the European project, and are becoming increasingly critical of their own elites and the postmodern values and patterns of behavior which these elites propagate. In the United States, meanwhile, the Kremlin is trying to reach conservative Christian circles with its ideological message, especially those that defend the traditional family model and oppose abortion. In the United States the Kremlin is also addressing supporters of isolationism, and those who urge Washington to respect the interests of other great powers and to seek agreement with Russia in the face of the rising power of China. Russian propaganda also draws on the economic crisis in Europe, and the growing disillusionment with both the European Union and the political forces that have so far dominated the political scene in Europe. The Kremlin’s conservative ideology draws indirectly on Putin’s idea of a “Great Europe” which is to be based on a double pillar of the European Union and the Eurasian Union, which together should form a “common economic and cultural space” extending “from Lisbon to Vladivostok.”
Another part of the Kremlin’s “conservative project” is the concept of the so-called Russian World (Русский Мир), which has been promoted by the Russian state since 2006. The “Russian World” is defined as a community of people who identify themselves not merely with Russian language and culture, but also with the traditions and achievements of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. This concept postulates the existence of a separate, multi-ethnic and multi-religious Russian civilization, which has the status of one of the world’s great civilizations. The primary aim of cultivating a sense of community thus defined is to weaken national identities of the citizens of post-Soviet states; to build up their ties with, and loyalty to, the Russian state; and to promote the idea that Russia alone can be their natural civilizational and political centre. Thus, the concept of the Russian World is an important tool in the Kremlin’s policy for reintegrating the post-Soviet space under the leadership and the domination of Russia. The Kremlin has also invoked this idea in its propaganda to legitimize the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and the “hybrid war” against Ukraine, pointing to the religious, historical and ethnic ties which these territories have with Russia. Crimea was portrayed as “the Temple Mount in Jerusalem,” and eastern and southern Ukraine as “Novorossiya.”

VI. THE “CONServative PROJECT”: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL OR A SELF-DELUSIONAL MIRAGE?

The Kremlin’s adoption of the new “conservative” ideology, and the implementation of the political project based on it, seems in the short term to have brought the Kremlin the desired results. In contrast, however, the long-term consequences may be unfavorable for the authorities.

For the time being the implementation of the “conservative project” has inhibited the erosion of legitimacy of the regime. It has consolidated most of the elite around President Putin, suppressing the burgeoning symptoms of dissatisfaction with the direction in which the regime has been developing. The project has also expanded the Kremlin’s mechanisms for monitoring the elites, whose fear of reprisals means that they only occasionally dare to take the risk of publicly protesting against the policy line currently pursued by the authorities. Moreover, Putin’s policies delegitimize and hinder any action which the opposition takes against him.

By appealing to conservative ideology, the authorities have managed to increase public support for Putin and justify the repressive measures taken against members of the elite and the middle class. The Kremlin’s actions, aimed both at the oligarchs and at various minorities (sexual, religious, ethnic), together with slogans against “American imperialism” and Western interference in the post-Soviet states, have met with an enthusiastic reception among broad sections of society. Equally effective means of mobilizing public support for the Kremlin has been the aggressive, anti-Western foreign policy. The annexation of Crimea proved particularly efficacious, raising President Putin’s approval ratings from 60% to over 80% and consolidating both the Russian public and the elites around the Kremlin.

Making a foreign policy tool out of the conservative ideology has also allowed Russia to expand the camp of its supporters in Europe by attracting the radical, populist and Eurosceptic right, which over the past few years, thanks to its electoral success, has moved from the fringes into the centre of European politics. The invocation of conservative ideology has also reinforced the Kremlin’s attempts to establish a tactical alliance with conservative Christian circles (also within the Roman Catholic Church), both in Europe and the United States. The “conservatism” proclaimed by the Kremlin also seems to have been quite an effective tool against the “soft power” of the European Union in the morally conservative post-Soviet societies, as is particularly evident in Georgia and Moldova, and was also observed in Ukraine before the Russian aggression.

On the other hand, among the mainstream of Western public opinion and in the Western political establishment, the donning of the conservative mask by the Kremlin has contributed significantly to a loss of sympathy, or even to an increase in hostility towards Russia, and in particular to its current authorities. Meanwhile within Russia, this conservative ideology will not solve the fundamental problem of the fragile legitimacy of the Kremlin’s authority in the eyes of that part of the Russian elite which had been expecting a gradual liberalization of the system – primarily of private business, of a large part of the state administration (including the so-called “establishment liberals”), and also of the more affluent social groups (i.e. the middle class). So far, these groups have been the main beneficiaries of Russia’s economic and technological cooperation with the West, the modalities of which allowed them to have a share in revenues from Russian raw material exports and to deposit, invest and spend their funds in the West. The Kremlin’s sharp anti-Western policy shift and the annexation of Crimea are definitely not in their interest. The sanctions imposed by the West have already caused significant financial losses, and they fear that there will be yet more such. The concerns of these groups have been further heightened by the Kremlin’s efforts to redistribute the largest assets (the Bashneft case), triggered by the worsening economic situation. Therefore in the long run, forcing through the “conservative project” carries the risk of destabilizing the regime, because it is antagonizing many groups within the elite and the affluent social strata, worsening their economic condition, and undermining their sense of security.

In addition, the Kremlin can hardly count on active public support for its ideological project. The deeply rooted passivity of Russian society means that even those initiatives it supports rarely mobilize them to undertake grassroots activity in accordance with the instructions of the Kremlin ideologues. One such example was the anti-Kremlin street protests in 2011-2012, when the authorities were forced to put a great deal of effort into organizing rallies supporting Putin and to bring entire factory crews to those rallies. Many of the conservative demands put forward by the Kremlin diverge from the real needs and aspirations of broader social groups. The proposed “traditional family values” are in conflict with contemporary Russian mores, and the Orthodox values being propagated contrast with the Russian people’s minimal level of real involvement in religious practice and the life of the Church.

The impact of the Kremlin’s conservative ideology may also be weakened by the fact that the ruling clan itself sees this ideology in purely instrumental terms. Many of the “conservative” declarations are in fact feigned and used for propaganda purposes; the Kremlin’s actions do not affect the oligarchic nature of Putin’s system, nor do they translate into an increase in the influence of “the people” on the mechanisms governing the state. The extreme materialism and ostentatious consumerism of the ruling elite stand in stark contrast to the values proclaimed, something which has not escaped public attention. There is a glaring discrepancy between the government’s patriotic and anti-Western
phraseology and the spectacular consumption of Western goods by its representatives. Due to its instrumental nature, the Kremlin’s ideology cannot build a lasting and genuine relationship between the government and society which would protect the government against a loss of support caused by the deterioration of economic conditions in Russia.

WITOLD RODKIEWICZ, JADWIGA ROGOŻA

Endnotes:

1. The roots of the Kremlin’s “conservatism”


3. Speech by the President to the Federal Assembly, 12 December 2012; http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/4739

4. Speech by the President to the Federal Assembly, 12 December 2013; http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6402

5. Speech by President Putin at a meeting of the Valdai Club, 19 September 2013, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6007


10. According to a survey by WCIOM of 15 May 2014, support for Putin rose from 60.9% in January 2014 to a record 85.9%. The Levada Centre poll of 30 April 2014 recorded an increase from 65% in January to 82% in April 2014.

11. The nationalization of the Bashneft oil company, which belonged to Vladimir Yevtushenkov, one of Russia’s richest men, was a negative sign for business. Russian companies now fear that this may be just the beginning of another wave of redistribution of assets, caused by the deterioration of the economic situation and the contraction of the resources available to the state and the oligarchs closest to the Kremlin.

12. Although around 73% of the Russian population declare themselves to be Orthodox, only around 3% regularly attend church and receive the sacraments (Levada Centre study, 2009). According to data from the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs from 2013, the Easter celebrations (the highest holiday of the Orthodox year) were attended by less than 4% of the population. In addition, Russia has the world’s highest divorce rate (UN demographic data for 2012). Russia is also a world leader in terms of abortions (which are legally permitted and subsidized by the state); it ranks first in the world in proportion to the population, and second place in absolute terms (after China).

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**Fool’s Cobra Gold**

**Broaching the subject of false positives in Information Operations Assessments**

*by* SPC Jake Lanum, HHC, 56th TIOG

**Editor’s Note:** Using Thailand after last year’s coup as an example, Specialist Lanum looks at how information operations assessments could be conducted. In particular, the author cautions against limited data that may produce false positives, due to the costs in both money and personnel, he suggests that periodic use of social media may be a way to conduct miniture audits of a targeted area.

**Context**

O

n May 22nd, 2014, The Royal Thai Army launched a coup d’état against the government of Thailand under the leadership of General Prayuth Chan-Ocha. Upon announcing the overthrow, a ban on political activism took effect. Citizens calling for protests on social media, or inciting them in public, were warned that they could face prosecution for sedition. In complement, the Thai Ministry of information has also intermittently blocked national access to social media outlets, including Twitter, altogether. Several URLs have remained blocked since the May coup.

The coup led to a near-global reprimand. Shared-border nations voiced concerns over diplomatic ties and border tensions. Millions of aid dollars were withheld. The United States alone withheld 3.5 million dollars in military aid and cancelled all of their military exercises there to date, including the 2014 iteration of the Cobra Gold annual bilateral exercise.

As the US State Department and Military deliberate on the future of ties with the nation, they must consider the strategic Information Operations goals in the nation. In addition, they must contemplate the accountabilities required to meet their goal, and the metrics by which they’ll measure their success. With the nature of the new Thai government, and the competing shaping operations they are conducting, there are

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Source: Author

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Figure 1. A banner in Bangkok, observed on 3 June 2014, informs the public that ‘like’ or ‘share’ activity on social media could land them in prison. The banner says this is “for the sake of the monarchy”.

Source: Author
unique operational challenges in measuring effects. If reliant upon standard, narrowly scoped, measures of effectiveness, there is great potential for false positives, indicating success in US diplomatic and military goals where little-to-no actual progress has been made.

**Case & Point: Cobra Gold Study**

A three month social media audit conducted from September to November 2014 added supplemental perspective on the information environment in Thailand post-coup. Tracking the sentimentality and momentum tied to a series of eight coup-related keywords and hashtags indicated a macro trend of steeply declining mentions across the board – some dropping more steeply than others (i.e. “Red Shirts”). The blanket decline could be interpreted as a drop in passion on the subject. If one looked at the data in a vacuum, this would be reinforced by the absence of any new negative mentions of the incoming party from October to November.

Alternatively, the aforementioned metrics could be a false positive, and may just serve as a testament of the absolute information dominance of the new regime in Thailand.

Presented with the favorable information however, confirmation-biased leaders would insist on continued military exercises and Information Operations without regard to any additional contrary evidence. Decision-making based on this type of faulty or incomplete information results in severely degraded mission conditions, regardless of the field of operation. This can be largely negated with thoughtful planning and with implementation of accountabilities in the formation of measures of effectiveness.

**Refining Measures of Effectiveness**

The basics of information collection and bias-reduction are taught to aspiring 17 and 18 year-old intelligence professionals in initial entry training at Ft. Huachuca every year, but the fundamentals are not always applied in the Information Operations discipline holistically. Utilizing a single source for anything is not a good idea, especially when that source is unproven or may be under distress. Social Media, HUMINT, SIGINT, and survey responses can all be indicators of the hostility or friendliness of a host nation. In isolation, however, those responses cannot be verified. There needs to be corroboration from secondary and tertiary sources for information to be acted upon in order to reduce risk. As such, when designing Information Operations Assessments, planners need to ensure that their accountabilities span several sources of confirmation. This mirrors the tailoring of media to specific demographics in the conduct of the actual shaping operations.

Aside from these foundational mitigations, efforts should also be made to observe change over time. Current doctrine dictates that IO practitioners have a baseline and a result to determine the level of their success or failure. This is analogous to taking a before and after picture of the greater Detroit area over the last 30 years. Equipped with the before and after picture, one would be able to see that the infrastructure has changed measurably, but couldn’t trace the genesis of the issues, or the speed at which things deteriorated.

To address this, assessment teams can, and should, conduct miniaturized audits of the informational atmospherics between the baseline and final assessment, where possible. Deploying assessment teams to collect information on the ground in the targeted areas is far too unwieldy and expensive to implement in this way, but social media provides an inexpensive insight that can be conducted periodically by reserve, guard, and active duty intelligence service members as a gut check.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Information Operations assessments, like all data sciences with dynamic variables, are subject to false positives. Conditions in the host nation can distort the sampling taken by assessment teams at the baseline, after the operations have been conducted, or any step in between. Assessment personnel must be vigilant to observe attempts to direct shaping operations to specific neighborhoods or otherwise tamper with results. By implementing controls, like taking a multi-discipline approach to collection, the potential for these false positives can be greatly reduced.

SPC Jake Lanum has planned multiple IO assessments with the 56th TIOG in the PACOM AOR. In a civilian capacity, he is a graduate student in Marketing at Harvard University, and an Intelligence Analyst for a corporate intelligence team.
The Case for a New Joint Function: Operationalizing the Human Domain through Engagement

By
Jeremy Sauer, Francisco Vega, Allisa Walker and Carlos Haddock

Editor’s Note: This article originally appeared in Small Wars Journal (SMJ). Only minor formatting changes were made to this article from the original to change the hyperlinks to endnotes. Per SMJ’s free share licensing, this article may be freely shared for non-commercial purposes. For full details of the SMJ licensing, see http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/.

T

here is no doubt that the United States joint force is the world’s most capable military. From small scale contingencies and crisis response to major combat operations, the joint force provides a broad range of options across the land, air, maritime, space, and cyberspace domains to decision makers. However, the joint force has yet to adequately account for the very reason it is applied to solve the nation’s problems – to coerce, deter, assure, and compel populations in the “human domain.” Indeed, influencing populations – peoples, militaries, and governments – is a cornerstone of joint operations; ensuring desired strategic outcomes are long-lasting through enduring changes to human behavior. Introducing a new joint function would significantly improve the ability of the joint force to influence populations.

Joint functions are a means to organize operations to improve force effectiveness. Joint functions are related capabilities and activities grouped together to help [joint force commanders] integrate, synchronize, and direct joint operations. Adding another joint function to the current set of six, which is attuned to the human domain, will fill a significant gap in how joint force commanders and their staffs organize and conduct operations. This seventh joint function will consist of those operations which enable transitions between the current doctrinal execution of a theater campaign plan, through any necessary shaping and combat operations, to the “new normal.” Additionally, this function will profess to long-term efforts, like stability operations and building partners’ capacity, which the joint force contributes the preponderance of resources to as part of a whole-of-government approach. To remain capable of full-spectrum superiority in the future, the joint force must operationalize the human domain through a seventh joint function.

The Importance of the Human Aspects of Military Operations: Past to Present

Many theorists recognize the criticality of human aspects of conflict and war. Thucydides posits the causes of war are fear, honor, and interest, all of which speak to irrational, social, and rational aspects of people, militaries, and governments. Sun Tzu identifies human aspects in his discussions on deception, confusion, and spirit. Belligerents can utilize deception, which is the basis of all wars, to confuse and anger each other. Further, skillful warriors avoid attacking troops with high morale. If one takes these ideas to heart, then dismissing the human domain will cause joint force commanders and their staffs to devalue the irrational aspects of adversaries, misread the enemy’s true intent, and ultimately lead to the development of misguided strategy. As Carl von Clausewitz states, war is “composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity … the first of these three aspects mainly concern the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government.” Therefore, applying kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities to understand and affect the decisions of people, security forces, and governments are essential to joint operations.

Looking to the past, and conscious of their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. land forces began to formally acknowledge the relevance of the human domain. In March 2012, U.S. Army Special Operations Command published the “Special Operations White Paper,” which defined the human domain as “the totality of the physical, cultural, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to fight and win population-centric conflicts.” This white paper also proposed the creation of a seventh warfighting function for the U.S. Army, named “special operations,” to facilitate operations in the human domain and aid capability development efforts. This notion was supported by many of the Army’s senior leaders and they have since advocated for the human domain and the seventh warfighting function, although naming it special operations was viewed by some as too parochial and limiting.

Interestingly, the joint force recently began to identify activities related to a seventh functional area in its future-focused concepts. The Capstone Concept for Joint Operations (CCJO) describes how future joint forces, globally postured, combine with each other and other mission partners across the range of military operations. This future operational construct entails specific implications across the six joint functions in addition to a seventh functional area identified as “partnership strategies.” Similarly, the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) describes how future joint forces gain operational access in environments characterized by anti-access and area denial capabilities. While this concept does not acknowledge “engagement” as a joint function, it identifies engagement capabilities, all relating to the human domain, which are essential to the concept’s implementation. For example, the JOAC requires the capability to develop relationships, support regional partners, and improve partners’ capabilities. Since the CCJO and JOAC are intended to drive force development across doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P), the next logical and inherent step for the joint force is to include a seventh joint function in doctrine.

In February 2014, the Army Chief of Staff approved the U.S. Army Functional Concept for Engagement. This groundbreaking concept expands from the Army’s current six functional concepts, all of which closely mirror the joint functions, except for mission command, which generally relates to command and control. The U.S. Army Functional Concept for Engagement describes how future Army forces “…operate more effectively in the land domain while fully accounting for the human aspects of conflict and war by providing lethal and nonlethal capabilities to assess,
shape, deter, and influence the decisions of security forces, governments, and people.13 The two broad components of this concept include partnership and special warfare activities. What is important to note is the Army considers its warfighting functions as building blocks of combat power.14 By definition, combat power includes lethal and nonlethal components, and adding another dimension promises to enhance the Army’s effective application of combat power. To ensure the decisiveness of operations in the future, the joint force must also adopt a seventh function to efficiently project combat power in and through the human domain.

Properly Framing Military Operations: The Imperative for the Seventh Joint Function

Joint functions are applied within the land, air, maritime, space, and cyberspace domains to achieve campaign objectives. Each function is applicable to multiple domains. For example, fires capabilities can originate from the maritime domain, pass through the air, to create effects on land. However, the one essential element missing from each domain, and from which each arguably derives its importance in military affairs, is the human element. While the human domain is not often explicitly recognized, it remains the foundational source from which all other domains derive their importance (see Figure 1). After all, if it were not for humans, the cyberspace domain would not exist, nor would the other domains be relevant. Similarly, although humans live on land, it is they who build and operate the ships which sail and planes that fly. It is within the human domain where joint forces ultimately ensure decisive outcomes. Therefore, joint force commanders and staffs must appreciate that operating effectively in and through the human domain is vital to achieving campaign objectives.

How do joint force commanders and their staffs plan to conduct operations in and through the human domain? Considering the current six joint functions, they attempt to account for those capabilities and activities intended to coerce, deter, assure, and compel enemy and friendly populations. Certainly, cells or “tiger teams” may form ad hoc to address the human aspects of conflict and war, but formally instituting a series of systems and tasks is in order to accurately account for operations in the human domain. These activities will provide an overarching purpose to the application of all other joint functions and thereby enable the joint force to remain dominant in land, air, maritime, space, and cyberspace operations.

The future joint force must operationalize the human domain through an “engagement” function. This new function should include those lethal and non-lethal capabilities and activities related to conducting security cooperation, influencing enemies and actors of concern, and ensuring a lasting peace if conflict occurs.15 Adding this engagement function enhances joint operations by aiding commanders and staffs to integrate, synchronize, and direct operations more holistically. The engagement function applies across the joint campaign phases and across the range of military operations, but it has significance in certain phases and operations and in the transitions between them. A visual depiction of how the future joint force applies power in and through all domains, including the human domain, by means of the seven joint functions is shown in Figure 2. Accounting for all the “steady state” activities and those that take place during the “stabilize” and “enable civil authorities” phases of joint operations within the current six joint functions is nearly impossible, as they are largely focused on the physical components of combat operations. Operationalizing the engagement function will provide the focus the joint force needs to remain effective across the phases of joint operations far into the future.

Implications of Adopting the Engagement Joint Function

The decision to add engagement to the family of joint functions must not be made lightly. Instead, the joint force must assess the benefits of the engagement function in light of the costs involved. Overall, the engagement function is expected to foster DOTMLPF-P changes, with doctrinal changes coming first. Determining how the engagement function is institutionalized may require years, as intellectual efforts often do in learning organizations as large as the joint force, but the results will pay dividends.

Several significant implications will result from adopting the engagement function. For example, joint force commanders must decide how best to put theory into practice and ensure the engagement tasks are not planned in a stovepipe. Additionally, the joint force must reconcile any existing recommendations...
to make niches like information operations a joint function. Likewise, capabilities and activities organized under the current six functions, such as civil-military operations, can be realigned to better fit under the engagement function, since doing so will improve the joint force’s ability to plan for, execute, and achieve decisive outcomes. Finally, the joint force must consider defining a new combat power model that captures how the joint force achieves decisive results by means of the seven joint functions. Through a series of joint wargames, experiments, and seminars, these and many other DOTMLPF-P gaps and solutions will become evident. A thorough understanding of all the implications of adopting the engagement function certainly deserves further exploration.

A Seventh Joint Function

The human domain is just as important as those possessing physical and virtual qualities and after 13 years of continuous conflict, most services have begun to conceptualize about how to account for the human aspects of military operations. Indeed, the joint force does more than fight and win the nation’s wars through physical means. Every day, in every region of the world, the joint force is conducting operations and protecting the homeland by, with, and through allies and partners. When called upon to fight, the joint force is ultimately aiming to physically and psychologically affect people, militaries, and governments. Since the human domain is essential to all operations, the joint force must operationalize it through the engagement function.

Operationalizing the engagement function will better enable joint force commanders and their staffs to apply combat power and integrate, synchronize, and direct the range of military operations across the phases of a joint campaign. Adding a seventh function to the current set requires further study to understand the implications, but ignoring the need all together risks the success of military operations by relegating those capabilities and activities as afterthoughts. Applying the systems and tasks associated with the engagement function will improve how the joint force deters adversaries, compels and coerces enemies, and assures allies and partners. Adoption of the engagement function is vital for the continued dominance of the joint force and its ability to achieve full spectrum superiority in the future.

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Endnotes:

1. In a military context, and for the purpose of this paper, domains are those physical and virtual environments in which human activity occurs.

2. The U.S. Army recently defined the human domain as “the cultural, psychological and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that the success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to influence, fight, and win in population-centric conflicts.” Department of the Army, The U.S. Army Functional Concept for Engagement, http://www.tradoc.army.mil/tpubs/pams/tp252-8-5.pdf, 36.


5. Full spectrum superiority is defined as “the cumulative effect of dominance in the air, land, maritime, and space domains and information environment (which includes cyberspace) that permits the conduct of joint operations without effective opposition or prohibitive interference.” Joint Operations, GL-10.


11. Anti-access is defined as “those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area.” Area denial is defined as “those actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area.” Department of Defense, Joint Operational Access Concept, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/JOAC_Jan%202012_Signed.pdf, i.

12. Ibid, 33-34.


14. Combat power is “the total means of destructive, constructive, and information capabilities that a military unit or formation can apply at a given time.” Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication 3-0, Unified Land Operations, http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/adp3_0.pdf, 3-1 – 3-2.

OPSE-1500
23 Mar: Seoul, South Korea
6 Apr: Djibouti, Rep. of Djibouti
27 Apr: Constanta, Romania
27 Apr: San Antonio, TX
11 May: Stuttgart, GE
8 Jun: San Antonio, TX
8 Jun: Doral, FL
23 Jun: Colorado Springs, CO

OPSE-2500
24-27 Mar: Seoul, South Korea
7-9 Apr: Djibouti, Rep. of Djibouti
28 Apr-1 May: Constanta, Romania
28 Apr-1 May: San Antonio, TX
5-8 May: Scott AFB, IL
12-15 May: Stuttgart, GE
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The focus of the OPSEC and Internet-based Capabilities (OPSE-3500) course is to introduce OPSEC practitioners to common threats, vulnerabilities, and countermeasures associated with Internet-based Capabilities (IbC). It will allow OPSEC practitioners to better assess the risk when considering IbC.
Putin, Clausewitz, and Ukraine

By CAPT Alex Deep, USA

Russia has applied limited war as a means by which to achieve its political goals since the early 1990s. Conflicts in Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan displayed Russia’s willingness to use the defense of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers as a justification to undermine the territorial integrity of neighboring states in order to maintain its influence over the former Soviet Bloc. However, Russia escalated its formula of limited war through indigenous ethnic forces when it annexed the Crimean Peninsula. The separatist struggle that ensued in Eastern Ukraine marked a return to Russia’s traditional model, but with increased visibility from the West, and economic sanctions that Russia did not see with its previous endeavors. Going back to Clausewitz, Russian President Vladimir Putin is attempting to balance the trinity of passion, military means, and political aims in executing a plan that relies on friction and mass to succeed on the ground. However, the real question might not be whether Putin’s strategy is Clausewitzian, but whether he is choosing the correct means by which to accomplish the goal of increasing Russian influence along its borders.

Clausewitz would laud Putin’s ability to use war as a way of achieving political ends. Russia only chose to initiate hostilities after other forms of political power had failed to maintain its influence over Ukraine such as gas subsidies and support to the regime of Viktor Yanukovych, especially towards joining Russia’s burgeoning Eurasian custom house. However, the removal of Yanukovych and the immediate shift of the new Ukrainian government towards Europe caused Russia to respond with military force through the annexation of Crimea and subsequent support to separatists in Eastern Ukraine. Russia views these actions as its best chance to maintain its influence over a state that it cannot “lose” to Europe. Russia will continue to view Ukraine as absolutely essential to its national security framework as Russia considers the expansion of NATO and the potential deployment of land- and sea-based missile defense systems near its border as encirclement by the West.

Russia has the passion of ethnic nationalism both domestically and within the Russian Diaspora to justify its military intervention in Ukraine. Konstantin Dolgov, the Foreign Ministry official in charge of defending the right of ethnic Russians living abroad, remarked that, “the bacteria of neo-Nazism is spreading across Europe.” At the same time, Vladimir Putin has publicly vowed to defend “Russian citizens” and “Russian speakers” from this perceived danger of persecution at the hands of fascist radicals including offensive action if necessary. This rhetoric is popular in Russia and amongst ethnic Russians in Ukraine as many see the actions of the new Ukrainian regime as a direct challenge not only to Russian national security, but also as a threat to a “fascist” regime against ethnic Russians. However, the danger of overly relying on the passion of the population rises as support fades, and Russian public support for its government’s interventionist policies has continued to wane. As economic sanctions take their toll on the Russian economy combined with a devaluation of the ruble and eroding standards of living, “enthusiasm for war and isolation is diminishing fast.” If this is the case, Russia might have to face the possibility of waging an unpopular war in Ukraine and falling into recession in 2015.

Shifting from the strategic to the operational and tactical levels, Russia is leveraging the Clausewitzian concepts of friction and mass to its advantage in Ukraine. The persistent ambiguity over Russian overt military involvement due to a lack of information coming out of Eastern Ukraine has been advantageous to Russian strategy as it causes friction and a fog of war to develop for both Ukrainian forces and the international community. Russian news media has greatest access to the region as reporters embedded with separatist units provide a propagandized version of the conflict for consumption both in Russia and, more importantly, with the targeted Russian Diaspora in Eastern Ukraine that watches predominantly Russian television. The idea that information technology has somehow lifted Clausewitz’s fog of war does not apply when Russia is able to maintain information dominance over the narrative coming out of Eastern Ukraine.

Despite taking advantage of friction during the initial phases of the conflict, Russia was also the victim of this concept when separatists shot down Malaysian Airlines Flight 777. Despite publicly blaming this tragedy on the Ukrainian government, Putin had to mitigate this event through a massive propaganda campaign within Russia and by temporarily limiting overt support to separatist rebels even as Russian troops continued to mass on the border. During this time, the Ukrainian military seemed poised to reclaim all the territory that separatist rebels had seized at the beginning of the conflict.

When faced with the decision of whether to allow Ukrainian advance or escalate the conflict further, Russia decided to mass additional weapons, armor, and personnel in Eastern Ukraine with immediate effects. The Russian application of mass allowed the separatists to regain the offensive and extend their territorial control in the east. Had Russia decided not to mass combat power at this decisive moment, the conflict in Ukraine could have either ended with a restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over the breakaway region, or forced Russia to escalate further to a conventional invasion.

According to Clausewitz, the nature of the commander is essential towards the execution of a military campaign to achieve political ends. However, he warns that the military and political structures should be separate with the former subordinate to the latter. In Russia, Vladimir Putin has essentially combined the roles of military commander and political leader, driving Russian political policy and the military means by which to achieve those goals. Putin has displayed characteristics of a leader that Clausewitz equated to “genius” such as decisiveness, political awareness, and determination, in the execution of a nuanced strategy to
expand Russian influence. However, Clausewitz also understood that leaders must be able to alter actions and decisions based on the effectiveness of a strategy. Whether Putin can do this is still undetermined, but his staunchness in continuing to execute a strategy that alienates the states he wants to influence, seems counterintuitive.

As Clausewitz used historic examples to display general concepts, comparing Russian strategy in Ukraine with pre-WWI sheds historic light on Russian behavior. Prior to WWI, Russia equated its great power status to territorial expansion and influence over its Slavic Diaspora in the Balkans as Czar Nicholas II drove the decision-making process based on the nature of the authoritarian regime. However, this obsession with expansion led Russia to decline as defeats in the Russo-Japanese War and Crimean War weakened its status prior to 1914, and WWI led to social revolution.12 Today, Russia is executing an aggressive strategy to reclaim its great power status through a hybrid of conventional and irregular warfare under the auspice of protecting the Russian Diaspora. However, this obsession with destabilizing the territorial integrity of neighboring states, now including territorial expansion in Crimea, has weakened Russia financially and encouraged states within its perceived sphere to move towards the West. Russia is following concepts from Clausewitz in Ukraine, but might be selecting the wrong strategy to achieve its political goals.

Endnotes:


2. Ibid, 63.


5. Mankoff, 62.


7. According to the Economist article “Russia and Ukraine: Putin’s People” from 13 December 2014, “Over the past nine months opinion polls find that support for the presence of Russian troops in Ukraine have fallen from 74% to 23%.”


Editor’s Note: This is the 10th in a series of updates on activities involving the Information Operations Best Practices Community of Practice (IO BP CoP). The IO BP CoP comprises a mailing list of over 100 individuals from 20 organizations across the joint IO community, interagency, and services. The CoP meets quarterly via SIPRNet Defense Connect Online (DCO) to share information on potential joint IO BPs.

Since its inception in September 2012, the IO Best Practices Community of Practice (IO BP CoP) has conducted 13 virtual collaboration sessions via VTC and SIPRNet Defense Connect Online (DCO). Eleven of those sessions were regularly scheduled (quarterly) sessions, and two were out-of-cycle sessions on special-interest topics. Topics have included such subject areas as force development, IO planning tools/processes, assessment, and effects-based targeting, subject-matter expert exchanges, and the DOD Rewards Program.

On 25 February, the IO BP CoP held their 1QCY15 virtual collaboration session via DCO. Two speakers from the Joint Assessment Doctrine (JADE) Evaluation Quick Reaction Test (QRT), Mr. Walt Ledford and Dr. Tom Bock, provided an update on recent efforts to refine the IO Assessment process. JADE QRT has been tasked to develop a DOTMLPF memorandum of findings for the joint staff that will:

- Provide revision recommendations and inputs for JP 3-0 and JP 5-0;
- Provide recommendations for joint training on conducting operation assessment; and
- Provide recommendations for joint education on conducting operation assessment.

One major issue JADE QRT noted during their research was assessment terminology is often contradictory, unclear, and/or restrictive.

Finally, Dr. Brock discussed the assessment survey they conducted. Of 162 stakeholders that received surveys, 62 were completed. These surveys showed that there were significant issues with operation assessment in doctrine and training and education.

The next IO BP collaborative session is currently scheduled for 20 May 2015, 1100 Central Time. Optimum participation is encouraged, as are nominations for additional BP-related topics for sharing. Nominating a topic does not necessarily equate to a volunteer statement to present. We can research subject-matter experts and organizations who may be willing to share their expertise on areas of interest. Points of contact for the IO BP collaborative effort are Maj. Dan DuBois at daniel.dubois@us.af.mil on NIPRNET, daniel.l.dubois2.mil@mail.smil.mil on SIPRNET, or telephonically at 210.977.4973/DSN 969.4973 and Mr. Roger Gaebel at roger.gaebel.ctr@us.af.mil, roger.gaebel.ctr@mail.smil.mil, 210.977.4666/DSN 969.4666. Lead is Mr. Ricardo Coronado, GG-14, 210.925.8004, and at ricardo.coronado@us.af.mil, ricardo.t.coronado.civ@mail.smil.mil.

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Information Operations Best Practices Collaboration
by
Maj. Dan DuBois

Improving Joint Information Operations One Step at a Time
Join us on SIPRNet at http://intelshare.intelink.gov/sites/jiowc/Products/Advocacy/BP/
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Contact the CoP facilitator, Maj. Dan DuBois, at daniel.l.dubois2.mil@mail.smil.mil
First impressions are very important when it comes to any type of meeting or engagement. How you look and present yourself will dictate how the meeting goes and what the outcome is. This article will encompass three sections: Preparation, Execution and Analysis.

I will break the preparation phase down into personal preparation, research and rehearsals. Although each section or phase is just as important as the next, it all starts with the proper preparation and how well you prepare depends on how well the engagement goes for you and how good the outcome meets your end state.

The first part of the preparation is doing a good mission analysis: knowing your audience and coming up with goals and an end state. It is imperative that when writing your goals you are obtainable, assessable and only one action per goal and an end state. It is imperative that when writing your goals you are obtainable, assessable and only one action per goal. For example:

**Goal 1**: Obtain employment with XXX organization.
- Objective 1A. Gain rapport
- Objective 1B. Get immediate feedback during the interview
- Objective 1C. Get second interview if necessary

**Goal 2**: Obtain the salary XXX (within + or – 2%).
- Objective 2A. Open salary negotiation
- Objective 2B. State what you bring to the team to deserve what you are requesting.

**End state**: I will be hired for the position I am interviewing for and obtain the salary that I am worth.

Now, you are probably asking, “How do I reach those goals?” Well, the first part of the answer to that is research. You need to gain as much knowledge as possible about the person or people you are engaging and the business they work for. Things you need to research for the person and the business (to include the position you are interviewing for) are:

The person: What are their likes/dislikes? What is their educational background? Are they married, have kids? What type of morals/values do they have? What religion are they? Do they speak other languages? Do they have anything in common with you such as hobbies?

How do you gain this knowledge? Websites like Google, wiki and other social media are incredibly valuable. You can find out most of these things by looking in those places on the web, but a lot of it will also come during the first interview by looking around the office, being personable and asking questions. Once you go into their office for an interview, most people will hang up their degrees, have a certain type/genre of books on the bookshelf, certain types of decorations or pictures, and probably have pictures of their family on the desk. All of these things you can use to gain rapport by asking questions. For example:

“I see you have a lot of boat decorations and pictures up, do you own a boat?” This will then spur conversations about boats and if you are a boat owner or knowledgeable about them. It gives you something in common with your interviewer. People like to talk about themselves and by you showing interest in them helps you gain rapport with them.

The business: What does the business DO? Do they have any competitors? What are their corporate values? Do they do any charity work? Who are their key members and what they do or what are their positions?

The company website usually has all of the information to answer most of the questions above. You just have to do a little digging.

The position: What are the daily duties and scope of the position? How does the position fit in with the corporation? Who are the other team members? Who will be your boss? What is the average/mean salary for the position in your area? Where do you think you sit on the salary line with your education and experience?

The position posting will usually tell you what your duties will be and what certifications, qualifications, experience, and education that is required. There are other websites that will tell you what the salaries are in your area for the specific job you are interviewing for. Some of the information you will have to gather at the interview by asking the direct questions.

The next part of preparation is conducting rehearsals. Know what you want to get out of the meeting and if there is anything you have to give, if necessary, to include what your options are or what you are comfortable with negotiating. If this is another type of meeting like a military key leader engagement it will follow the same rules as above except you will also bring a note taker (which will help out gaining the information on the person you are meeting with by scanning the office and writing down as many observations as possible).

Depending on where you are and if there are any language barriers you might also want to consider bringing an interpreter. Rehearsing with the interpreter is a must. It is always good to bring someone you are comfortable with and someone you trust so you know the right message is getting translated.

Make sure you have someone role play the person you are supposed to meet with and answer actual questions. Go through several iterations of this engagement and consider as many wrenches that may be thrown in as possible.

Personal presentation is extremely important. It is the very first impression you make on the person you are meeting/interviewing with. Most people make their minds up about a person within the first ten seconds of meeting them. You
Some of the considerations and preparations you need to do are getting a fresh hair cut, make sure nails are clipped and neatly groomed, be clean shaven, make sure you have fresh breath, make sure you don’t have any nose or ear hairs sticking out to distract from your personal appearance. Don’t wear too much cologne or make-up. Ensure you are freshly showered and have on deodorant. If you sweat a lot bring a small hand towel to dry off with before you go into the interview and bring hand sanitizer so your hands are not sticky when you go to hand shake.

Always dress to impress. This includes ensuring your clothes fit properly, and are tailored if you are wearing a suit. The accessories are equally as important as the clothes are and are often overlooked. Other considerations are matching your belt and shoe color, not wearing a sport watch with a business suit, wearing proper shoes with your attire, and making sure your tie matches and does not distract the interviewer. You only get one time for a first impression. This goes for every time you go out. You never know who you will run into and when it will be imperative to make that first impression.

Now that you are familiar with preparation here are a few tips on how to gain rapport rapidly and execute the meeting successfully. As soon as you walk through the door they will be watching and paying attention to you. You have made a great first impression by how you dress and how you walk, which shows confidence. Make sure you smile and your hands are not wet and sticky, and then give a firm handshake.

As the meeting actually opens make sure to always start by sitting in a formal stance then take cues from the interviewer. Take a mental note of how fast or slow they are talking to you and then match the tone and speed of their voice. Also notice the speed they are breathing. This gives you a huge advantage. If they are breathing fast or heavily, more than likely they are in a hurry or are aggravated about something. By matching their breath subconsciously they will then eventually start matching your breath and you can actually start to slow their breathing down and calm them. This takes a lot of practice but the more rapport you gain the easier it is. Making small talk will give you time to watch and listen to the interviewer and give you time to look around the room inconspicuously.

Now use the information you gained during the preparation and example of looking for common interests. Talking about them and being knowledgeable about things they care about go a long way in gaining and maintain rapport. This is also where you discuss what you want to gain, answer questions, bring credibility to yourself by expanding on subjects and personal certifications and experience.

When closing a meeting or interview make sure you answer their questions and at the end they will ask you if you have any questions as well. Never say no. Always have questions to ask about the team or job. Always restate what was accomplished and schedule a follow up if needed.

After the meeting it is always important to conduct an analysis. Some things to answer: Did you get what you wanted? Did you establish good rapport? What did your note taker notice about the office/meeting place? Make sure to update info on who you talked with any new personal information, what went right, what could be better for next time? This way you always have more information and ensure your subsequent meetings go well and improve rapport.

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The Reach of the Bear: 
Russian Information Operations

By
Fred A. Tafoya

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Editor’s Note: Russia has long been a believer in information warfare (information operations) and uses it to good effect. As well, due to historical events that have effected Russia, they believe they need a “buffer zone” to protect them from further aggression. The following article discusses Russia’s use of information warfare as a way to extend their influence over those countries that once made up the Soviet Union.

Introduction

Recent Russian actions in eastern Ukraine and the Crimea have forced a reassessment of the long-term threat posed by Russia to the nations in its so-called “Near Abroad.” Beyond Russia’s ability to field forces for kinetic operations, the role of its Information Warfare effort merits examination as it appears to have been a critical component of Russia’s operations in the Near Abroad. A review of publically available information from news agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academic journals indicates that far from being a recent development, Russia has a long history of using information in order to support its national objectives. Additionally, Russia bases its actions in the information environment on perceptions of the current threat to Russian interests, and the collective memory of the Russia experience.

Historical Influences

Throughout history, Russia suffered from both invasions and numerous conflicts with major powers. These powers have included the Mongols, Napoleonic France, England, the Ottoman Empire, Japan, and Germany under both the Kaiser and Nazi governments (Kaplan, 2012; Laitin, 1998). The majority of Russia’s territory lacks the geographical features required to protect it from invasion by foreign powers (Kaplan, 2014). Russian leadership views the states within the Near Abroad as a buffer zone essential to protect Russian security (Humphrey, 2009). Consequently, Russia has long sought to ensure its security by establishing and maintaining a zone of special influence in the territories closest to its borders (Farhat-Holzman, 2014; Greene, 2009). Russian leadership assumes that “all states seek to expand their influence using both hard and soft power under the doctrine of Realpolitik” (Trenin, 2007, p. 35). Russia views, with a degree of political paranoia created by their own failures to achieve imperialistic goals against Europe and Asia, Western advocacy of liberal democratic or “universal” values as a smokescreen under which the EU, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United States seek to strengthen their positions at Russia’s expense. A xenophobic sense of entitlement and grandiosity has long influenced Russia’s history. Russia seeks to be both respected and feared. Russia strives to both isolate itself from foreign influences while being a leading actor in world affairs. There is a mix of inferiority complex, narcissistic injury, and reactive grandiosity in Russian politics that fuels its aggression under the guise of “defense” and aid to its “mistreated ethnic compatriots.”

Russian Threat Perceptions

People interpret events through the prism of existing knowledge, experience, and the psychological forces in its leaders and culture (Horgan & Timmons, 2007; Wertsch & Karumidze, 2009). Russia’s Ministry of Defense (MOD) viewed NATO’s post-Soviet continuation and its subsequent eastward expansion as a continuation of Western hostile intent. This enabled Western forces to stage assets closer to Russian borders than had been the case while the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact existed (Jackson, 2002). Russian military leadership likely views the Soviet Union’s collapse as a preeminent example of non-kinetic activities leading to the achievement of Western strategic goals at the expense of Russia; in this case, the long-term goal of the United States and NATO to end the Soviet (i.e. Russian) domination of Eastern Europe (Blank, 2008). Russian leadership also views US operations in Iraq and NATO’s operations in Afghanistan as troubling. Russia views these operations as having a directly negative effect on Russia’s security interests (Russian relations with the former government of Iraq and the proximity of Afghanistan to the Near Abroad). Furthermore, Russia perceives a double standard from Western criticism of Russian counter-terrorist operations in the regions of Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia, while the West engages in humanitarian interventions (e.g., Bosnia, Kosovo, Libya) and counter-terrorist operations throughout the world (Mash, 2008). Finally, Russia views itself as under siege from Western cultural influences that Russia believes undermine its internal stability (e.g., human rights NGOs that seek to reign in Russian state security operations against real and perceived enemies of the state) as well as its influence in the Near Abroad (Blank, 2013; Darczewska, 2008). The 2012 law on Russian NGOs that receive foreign funding highlights the depth of Russia’s paranoia towards NGOs that seek to advance
human rights. These organizations are required to register as “foreign agents” (Reuters, 2012). Russia views countering Western influence both internally and in the Near Abroad as critical to its security interests (Darczewska, 2008; Mankoff, 2014). Russia has an established history of interventions in order to assert its influence, but it may have little capacity for the introspection required to consider the long-term effects of its policies on global stability or long-term Russian economic viability (Darczewska, 2008; Mankoff, 2014). Russia has yet to recognize the fact that it was the aggressor for decades during the Cold War, and that its current efforts to impose its will upon sovereign nations in the Near Abroad is a continuation of Russian aggression.

**Russia’s Contemporary Use of Information Operations**

Russian leadership draws upon a long history of using what the United States terms as Information Operations (IO) to conduct “large scale political warfare in order to reshape the thinking of an entire community” (Blank, 2013; Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Russian influence operations trace a lineage to Soviet “spetspropaganda,” or special propaganda, whose importance to state security was recognized prior to the onset of World War Two (Darczewska, 2008). Influence operations have grown in importance to Russian security in the post-Soviet era. Leading voices within the post-Soviet Russian military have spoken publicly about the weaponization of information and a change in the very nature of war (Blank, 2013; Coalson, 2014; Thomas, 2014). Russia recognizes that information operations allow nations to achieve political objectives with means short of committing military forces to kinetic action, or in concert with kinetic action during times of conflict (Blank, 2013; Thomas, 2014). General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the Russian General Staff noted:

> The focus of applied methods of conflict has altered in the direction of the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian, and other nonmilitary measures—applied in coordination with the protest potential of the population. All this is supplemented by military means of a concealed character, including carrying out actions of informational conflict and the actions of special-operations forces. The open use of forces—often under the guise of peacekeeping and crisis regulation—is resorted to only at a certain stage, primarily for the achievement of final success in the conflict. The information space opens wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy. In north Africa, we witnessed the use of technologies for influencing state structures and the population with the help of information networks. It is necessary to perfect activities in the information space, including the defense of our own objects (Coalson, 2014; Galeotti, 2014).

As Russia views itself as the target of Western information warfare, it has continued to develop its ability to operate effectively in the information environment (Blank, 2013; Thomas, 2014). Russia has established several lines of effort to contest the information environment and has engaged in the widespread manipulation of the Russia public due to the Russian government’s near total dominance of television (Nisbet & Mikati, 2015).

**Media:** The Russian government has stood up news organizations in order to advance the Russian government perspective (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). For example, the Kremlin controls Central Russian Television News, yet this media outlet enjoys widespread support and is the primary source of news for 84% of the Russian populace (Nisbet & Mikati, 2015). In addition to advancing the Russian state position in international affairs, Russian news organizations such as Central Russia TV and RT (Russia Today) give airtime to Western political actors, who advance conspiracy theories, anti-Western policies, sow suspicion of independent media outlets, and serve as disinformation platforms (Nisbet & Mikati, 2015; Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Russia also employs individuals to influence western opinion via op-ed articles/interviews in which their funding by Russian organizations is seldom disclosed (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Russia uses its media reach within the Near Abroad (both broadcast and Internet based) in order to target ethnic Russians with themes and messages designed to leverage so-called “collective memory” as well as long-standing grievances (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014; Wertsch & Karumidze, 2009). Russia uses thousands of so-called “Internet trolls” to feed disinformation on social media as well as engage in abusive/vulgar commentary in order to disrupt information consumers from engaging in facts-based debate on issues (Aliaksandrau, 2014; Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). The growth of social media has enabled Russian influence operations to disseminate information to widely dispersed audiences, in near real-time, while bypassing traditional gatekeepers who help to ensure accuracy of information. Between the reach of broadcast media such as (but not limited to) RT and the Internet-based efforts at dissemination, Russian influence operations have established a persistent reach to targeted audiences that far exceeds anything the Soviet Union was ever able to establish.

**Ethnic Russians living in the Near Abroad:** The Russian state’s near total dominance of the information environment in Russia allows for creation of a near constant stream of information/disinformation sympathetic to the Russian government’s perspective for Russian language audiences outside of Russia itself (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Propaganda disseminated under the cover of news reports have disseminated false information of atrocities committed against ethnic Russians in the Near Abroad, while imposing a near blackout of information related to Russian misdeeds or casualties (Aliaksandrau, 2014; Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014; Wertsch & Karumidze, 2009). Putin’s repeated insistence that Moscow is the protector of all Russians worldwide illustrates the foundational basis for these propaganda efforts. Where Russians and Russian-speakers live, where Russian culture and the Russian Orthodox faith hold or held sway, Putin describes these people and areas as nash — “ours.” Russian messaging often finds a receptive audience among ethnic Russians in the Near Abroad as the Russian minorities perceive the non-Russian majority as oppressive of Russian culture and language. Additionally, large numbers of ethnic
Russians may not have full citizenship in the host country (Conant, 2014; Motyl, 2015; Satfire, 1994). Whether or not the Russian minority in a particular nation in fact faces obstacles to full integration within the host nation is beyond the scope of this paper; however, it is important to note that pre-existing grievances among these populations give Russian influence operations a potential attack vector. Russian minorities in several nations have already organized into political parties (Commercio, 2004; STRATFOR, 2014). These political parties could be used to advance a separatist agenda. NATO nations' intervention on behalf of Kosovar Albanians, and recognition of Kosovo's independence is used as precedent for Russia's actions in the Near Abroad, despite the fact that Russia opposed both; thus, NATO governments may need to be prepared to articulate the differences between their situation and historic precedence (Berzins, 2014).

Russia uses deniable groups such as the Russia-based “Night Wolves” motorcycle club as agents of influence meant to stoke pro-Russian sentiment and pan-Slavic pride throughout Europe (Llobet & Popov, 2014; Shuster, 2014). Russia also reportedly uses organized criminal networks (clandestine and violent by nature) as agents of destabilization, influence, and intelligence in return for a symbiotic relationship with the Russian state (Fickenauer & Voronin, 2001; Orttung & Walker, 2015; Porter, 2015).

Russia reportedly has issued passports to ethnic Russians living outside of Russia; actions that provide a pretext for intervention within the Near Abroad (Blomfield, 2008; Lohr, 2014). While ethnic pride in-and-of-itself is not necessarily a cause for concern, Russia’s use of such tribalism undertaken within any of the NATO countries whose ethnic Russian populations feel estranged from the majority population/government may find fertile ground.

**Economic Tools**: Russia has used its status as a major energy producer to punish political actions that run counter to Russian interests, and reward behavior that supports Russian objectives (Emerging Markets Monitor, 2006; Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Globalization of markets has allowed Russia to establish itself as a critical financial component of key economic sectors in Western nations (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). The importance of Russian capital to key Western nations has led business leaders to lobby their national leadership to refrain from actions that could potentially disrupt these flows of trade between their nations and Russia (Norman, 2014; Scheep & Schmergal, 2014; SPIEGEL Staff, 2014). Additionally, Russia has reportedly funded movements and political leaders who advocate policies that align with Russia’s interests (Dodman, 2014; Johnson, 2014; Orenstein, 2014; Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014). Numerous media reports indicate Russia has found numerous Western political parties that are willing to accept Russian financial assistance in order to build their political party’s base of support, or advance their policy positions (Bender, 2014). Western nations have had to launch counterintelligence investigations to address the threat posed by Russia’s purchase of “agents of influence” (Braw, 2014; Day, 2014). This last point bears repeating; Russia uses money in order to influence the public policy of Western nations by directly influencing the democratic process within these nations, and coopting members of Western governments.

**Conclusion**

Russia has long viewed information operations (or information warfare) as a key component in their national security architecture. While the current downturn in the Russian economy due to falling energy prices and economic sanctions may constrain Russia’s ability to engage as actively as before, Russia views itself as under assault from Western nations who seek to spread Western democratic norms throughout the Near Abroad and into Russia itself. Russian leadership views such “encroachment” as a threat to Russia’s national security and internal stability. While the US/EU view liberal democracy as a positive value, Moscow views this as a hostile “contagion” against which Russia must insulate and quarantine. Thus, Russia will continue to engage in activities designed to influence nations within the Near Abroad to adopt policies that align with Russian strategic objectives; or failing that, that disrupt the ability of nations within the Near Abroad to integrate fully with Western economic/military structures. Russia will continue to engage in operations designed to take advantage of Western democracies’ need to fundraise in order to effectively campaign, potentially undermining Western resolve from within.

Nation-states within the Near Abroad with significant ethnic Russian populations (or those who identify with Russia) are at significant risk for Russian influence operations due to Russia’s ability to leverage the collective memory or pre-existing grievances. An increase or decrease in the number of nationals who claim either dual citizenship (host nation and Russian) or whose only passport is Russian may serve as an indicator of Russian interest in coopting ethnic Russians in the targeted country; however, specific conditions will vary by country and demographics. Western nations seeking to counter Russian influence operations would do well to understand the holistic nature of Russian operations (i.e., not limited to the military realm) and ensure counter-messages take the target audience’s collective memory and existing grievances into account. Finally, Russian leadership’s pernicious view of Western advocacy for liberal democratic norms (i.e., Russia assumes they are meant to undermine Russian national security and keep Russia weak) are unlikely to change in the near term. Russia assumes that all nations seek to advance their interests at the expense of competitors, in the same way...
that Western nations view freedom of the press and liberal democratic norms as “universal values.” Therefore, themes and messages that factor in the Russian perception are more likely to resonate and effectively inform.

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Bibliography:


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**IO Sphere 2015 Themes**

**Overarching theme for CY 2015 will be “The Year of the Adversary”**

Each quarter we will focus on one specific area

- **Spring**: Russia; Submission Deadline 15 February 2015
- **Summer**: Violent Extremist Organization (e.g., Al-Qaida, ISIS); Submission Deadline 15 May 2015
- **Fall**: China; Submission Deadline 15 August 2015
- **Winter**: Iran and North Korea; Submission Deadline 15 November 2015

Submissions that don’t specifically meet the theme are also welcome so long as they are IO relevant

If you would like to be published in the IO Sphere or the IO Sphere Classified supplement, follow the submission guidelines found on http://home.iosphere.org
Editor’s Note: Rumor has long been used as an information operations weapon. This tool provides the capability to quickly disseminate misinformation to a targeted community with little risk of attribution. Rumor can, and has been, used to degrade the morale of civilian and military member of an adversary nation. Countering rumors can also present a serious challenge to the targeted nation. Whispering Snake takes a look at the use of rumor in warfare.

The use of rumor as a tool of black propaganda is nothing new. History is littered with tales of rumor warfare and its effects: from Gideon in the Jordan River Valley, Genghis Khan as he conquered Asia and Bonaparte during the Italian campaign. Whether its aim was to spread disinformation, reduce morale, enhance reputation, or simply to ridicule and undermine, it has been, and is still used to good effect.

Rumors are low-cost, low-tech communication weapons that can be used by anyone to disrupt the efforts of communications, civil affairs or outreach campaigns, such as those undertaken by governments in crisis response situations or militaries in insurgencies.

In World War II rumor warfare came of age: the network of resistance organisations, spies, saboteurs and fifth columnists proved excellent vectors and interlocutors to spread ‘mis’ and disinformation. This proliferation of false and deliberately false information led to the major powers creating departments responsible for the countering of enemy rumor warfare and the creation and dissemination of their own. In the United States, within weeks of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbour nearly a thousand malicious rumours had been recorded by researchers. The content of these rumours covered anti-Semitism, how to dodge the draft and opposition to the Joint Intelligence Committee. Later all sibs had to be approved by the Inter-Services Security Board and then onwards to the Joint Intelligence Committee. The US Government feared the spread of disinformation would seriously damage the war effort and forced President Roosevelt to broadcast repudiation in a special ‘fireside chat’ to the nation.

Robert Knapp in 1944 reports on his analysis of these thousand rumours. Knapp identified three basic characteristics that apply to rumor, all of which endure today:

1. They are transmitted by word of mouth
2. They provide “information” about a “person, happening, or condition”
3. They express and gratify “the emotional needs of the community”

Based on his study, Knapp divided those rumors into three types.

Pipe dreams that reflected public desires and wished-for outcomes (E.g. Japan’s oil reserves were low and thus World War II would soon end). Bogyman or fear rumours reflected feared outcomes (E.g. An enemy surprise attack is imminent).

Wedge-driving rumours intended to undermine group loyalty or interpersonal relations (e.g. American Catholics were seeking to avoid the draft; German-Americans, Italian-Americans, Japanese-Americans were not loyal).

Knapp also found that negative rumours were more likely to be disseminated than positive ones.

A humorous example of rumor warfare is demonstrated in a sketch by comedians Armstrong and Miller. In which they tell the story of the creation of a song about Hitler, Goebbels et al and their dysfunctional reproductive organs. At the end of the sketch a Churchillian figure proclaims, “Gentleman, I think we have just won ourselves a war.”

Greg Kelley, author of Colonel Bogey’s March through Folk and Popular Culture states: “As a means of ridiculing the Nazis, ‘Hitler Has Only Got One Ball became immensely popular among both British and American troops, who in transmitting this song were exercising something of a wartime convention by demeaning the sexual faculties of enemy leaders. But the mockery extended beyond just the Nazis’ sexual capacities. Since the 1920s, the words balls or ballsy had come to denote notions of courage, nerve, or fortitude. In that sense, defective testicles rendered the Nazis defective soldiers…was particularly forceful, and satisfying, to Allied soldiers in that it scattered satiric buckshot across the whole Nazi high command.”

It has been suggested that the pre-Glasnost Soviet descriptions of what remained of Hitler’s corpse reported his having only one functional testicle at the suggestion of Guy Burgess and/or Kim Philby, as part of their making a joke, based on this song, that they could expect the British population and secret services to get.

British wartime propaganda rumours were known as sibs, from the Latin sibilarre – to whisper – and were fabricated at Country Headquarters (CHQ) by the Underground Propaganda Committee (UPC), a department from within SO1 (the propaganda branch of the SOE). Contrary to popular belief, they were subject to an approvals process through an Inter-Services Security Board and then onwards to the Joint Intelligence Committee. Later all sibs had to be passed to the Foreign office for further approval. When the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) was formed, the UPC
was subsumed as a sub-committee. Of note the franc tireur Sefton Delmer was never a member of the UPC and had his own rumour manufactory.

Sibs as weapons of war must not be created haphazardly; they must be subject to approval and they must have their own ‘RoE’. They have to be part of the strategic plan and must support the narrative, albeit loosely. They can be used to undermine malign actors’ morale, to cause confusion as part of a deception plan but most of all they must be targeted. A3A\(^\text{10}\) is essential to achieve maximum effect, identify the targets’ susceptibility and vulnerability, and to allow Measurement of Effect (MoE). The PWE held the view that sibs …are not created for the edification or titivation of the audience.

During World War II this need for A3A or consumer research was not realised and central co-ordination was also paid lip service resulting often in message fratricide or the dissemination of childish and ridiculous sibs. One such 1940 rumour was vilified by the Daily Mail. It stated that 200 man eating sharks had been imported from Australia by the British Government and released into the English Channel.\(^\text{12}\)

OPSEC is vital, particularly if the source of the rumour and/or the disseminator is to retain credibility with the target audience.

Rumours must be short. Overly verbose rumours will lose their paddling as they are passed and lose their coherence, like a game of Chinese Whispers. Short and pithy rumours will gain embellishment as they are passed, as each vector elaborates.

In their study, Gordon Allport and Joseph Postman concluded that, “as rumor travels it […] grows shorter, more concise, more easily grasped and told.”\(^\text{13}\)

His conclusion was based on a test of message diffusion between persons, which found that about 70% of details in a message were lost in the first 5-6 mouth-to-mouth transmissions. Salacious details, especially about enemy leaders will enhance the sibs’ effectiveness, as in the case of Hitler and his monorchism.

Successful PWE sibs were simple and effective and usually layered, in that they are connected to Gustav Siegfried Eins of Ellic Howe\(^\text{16}\). Below are listed some of the more successful rumours:\(^\text{17}\)

“You do not see seagulls over the Mediterranean – they have all been killed by oil from sunken German tankers which tried to supply Rommel”

“Women in war factories are losing their good looks, their skins go yellow and they lose their capacity to bear children”

“Hitler has given instructions to Goebbels that no more references are to be made to him having been a corporal”

“SS men are in safe jobs at home and taking your wives and girlfriends whilst you fight at the front”

“Officers get the decent brothels with the best looking girls”

In 1944, using a combination of sib and the Nachrichten fur die Truppen\(^\text{20}\) newspaper, a new British invention was announced that could ensure that an Allied fighter would shoot down every German plane it attacked: the pilot would set a dial to the type of German plane, presses a button and the gadget, called the Automatic Sight Mk 11D, then takes over. It takes control of the aircraft, flies the plane and opens fire once in the optimum position, thus ensuring a 100% kill rate. This rumour had a grain of truth, six months earlier a new sight called the Giro Gunsight had been fitted to RAF and USAAF fighters. It did not fly the aircraft but it allowed the pilot to better assess angle of deflection and lead and increased by up to 50% the chances of a kill.\(^\text{19}\)

Few can resist the temptation to pass on bad news or find out and pass on details of the private lives of their leaders or key influencers. To be seen to be in the know and to be able to enhance your status by sharing what others don’t know is incredibly seductive. It is the exploitation of these base traits of human nature that form the basis for successful whispered propaganda.

The PWE’s recently declassified documents\(^\text{20}\) define Propaganda as:

*The deliberate direction, or even manipulation, of information to secure a definitive objective. It is an attempt to direct the thinking of the recipient, without his conscious collaboration, into predetermined channels. It is the conditioning of the recipient by devious methods with an ulterior motive. Propaganda emphasises those facts which best serve its purpose. It creates the atmosphere in which the audience is most susceptible to suggestion. By power of suggestion, which in favourable circumstances becomes instruction, it secures positive action.*

In the past, much research on rumour and propaganda came from psychological approaches. The focus was on how statements of questionable veracity (absolutely false to the ears of some listeners) circulated orally from person to person.

The Internet’s appearance as a new media technology has shown ever new possibilities for the fast diffusion of rumour. Nor had previous research taken into consideration the particular form or style of deliberately chosen rumours for political, strategic and military purposes in particular circumstances.

Working within political communication studies, Jayson Harsin introduced the concept of the “rumour bomb”\(^\text{21}\).

Harsin starts with the widespread definition of rumour as a claim whose truthfulness is in doubt and which often has no clear source even if its ideological or partisan origins and intents are clear. He then treats it as a particular rhetorical strategy in current contexts of media and politics in many societies. For Harsin, a rumour bomb extends the definition of rumour into a communication concept with the following features:

1. A crisis of verification – A crisis of verification is perhaps the most salient and politically dangerous aspect of rumor. Berenson\(^\text{22}\) defines rumor as a kind of persuasive message involving a proposition that lacks ‘secure standards of evidence.’

2. A context of public uncertainty or anxiety about a political group, figure, or cause, which the rumour bomb overcomes or transfers onto an opponent.

3. A clearly partisan even if an anonymous source (e.g. “an unnamed advisor to the president”), which seeks to profit politically from the rumor bomb’s diffusion.
A rapid diffusion via highly developed electronically mediated societies where news travels fast (superseding Knapp’s word of mouth transmission theory).

In addition, Harsin locates the rumour bomb within other communication methods as a layered approach. Unlike a “smear campaign,” rumour bombs need not be about discrediting a person. “Spin” also specifically refers to an event and its semiotics. Rumour bombs may seek to produce events themselves.

A rumour bomb can be seen as having some characteristics of these general concepts, but rumour bombs happen in very particular cultural and historical conditions. They begin in a rapport between deliberate “disinformers” and media, whether TV news, talk shows, newspapers, radio, or websites. They then circulate across these media, perhaps, but not necessarily, resulting in interpersonal mouth-to-ear rumour propagation.

Rumours also play an important role in strategic communication. They can be viewed as stories that seem rational but that are steeped into speculation and falsehoods in connection with a certain narrative.

As Bernardi notes, “Like their explosive cousins, rumours can be created and planted by nearly anybody, require limited resources to utilize, can be deadly for those in its direct path, and can instill fear.”

Propaganda by rumour is at its best when it refrains from making outright statements and contents itself with colouring information. It empowers and whitens the characters of some and undermines discredits and blackens others.

Rumours are more likely to resonate amongst the target audience and in the minds of people of many cultures more than official news and public affairs statements by military or government officials. In the integrated approach, where communication is key to shaping the battlespace, this must be a case for adopting a rumour warfare campaign that is designed to counter those propagated by malign forces using similar dissemination methods.

“Rumour is potentially useful in psychological warfare since its source is not obvious and does not depend on a formal communication system for its dissemination. Typically its dissemination occurs in a friendly face-to-face situation of mutual trust. For this reason, rumour tends to be more credible than conventional means of propaganda. It is particularly suitable for use in primitive communities where formal communications are ill-developed, uncontrolled and uncentralised.”

Rumour warfare should contain an element of truth in order to enhance credibility (as in the Mk 11D Automatic Sight sib). Outright falsehoods run the risk of being “caught out” and make direct refutation easy, damaging the credibility of the source considerably and potentially irreversibly. For example, this was seen in the case of the claims spread by the Infidels of Britain on their Facebook page that there exists an Islamic conspiracy to ban the children’s television program Peppa Pig. No such campaign exists; it was in fact a joke made by an internet prankster Zayn Sheikh. Several national newspapers picked up on the story and blindly reprinted it, links to social media groups were included and the story spread like wildfire and was reposted on other right wing social media sites such as those of the National front, English Defence League and Britain First. Even the Muslim Council of Britain was taken in by the spoof.

In an age where face-to-face communication has been replaced by anonymity and social media the power of rumour, propagated by whatever means, is stronger than ever.

“Content is not viewed as an object to be transmitted but as something that is shaped, reshaped and reinforced in a succession of communicative acts ….. In this sense a rumor may be regarded as something that is constantly being constructed.”

Endnotes:

1. Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion, 1922 p 158

2. Meaning Techniques and Methods of Political Warfare 1942 p 7 (ii)


5. Ami des Lois (Paris), 11 floréal, an 4 (28 April 1796). This sentiment was echoed in the 5 brumaire session of the Council of Five Hundred, when Rion paid tribute to Bonaparte: “It is above-all the young hero of Italy, this general who has surpassed himself in heroism, who deserves our attention. Like Caesar, he could say: ‘I came, I saw, I conquered.’ But Caesar attacked the rights of the people, and Bonaparte fights for liberty.”


You and I have the utmost contempt for Americans who, since
Pearl Harbor, have whispered or announced “off the record” that there was no longer any Pacific Fleet – that the fleet was all sunk or destroyed on December 7 -that more than a thousand of our planes were destroyed on the ground. They have suggested slyly that the Government has withheld the truth about casualties – that eleven or twelve thousand men were killed at Pearl Harbor instead of the figures as officially announced. They have even served the enemy propagandists by spreading the incredible story

7. A Psychology of Rumor, Robert Knapp, 1944
8. www.youtube.com/watch?v=MetBQSkDUoA
10. Actor, Audience, Adversary Analysis.
11. Meaning Techniques and Methods of Political Warfare 1942, p7 (iii)
13. Psychology of Rumor 1947, p75
14. Black Boomerang, Sefton Delmer, 1962Ch7. Gustav Siegfried Eins (GS1) was a British black propaganda radio station operated by the PWE. It was the brainchild of Sefton Delmer, and purported to be an illegal radio station operating within Nazi Germany
15. Black Boomerang, Sefton Delmer, 1962 Ch11. Soldatensender Calais(G,9) was a British black propaganda broadcaster during the Second World War operated by the Political Warfare Executive. It pretended to be a station of the German military broadcasting network (“Soldiers’ Radio Calais”). The station was in operation between November 14, 1943, and April 30, 1945, when it ceased operations
16. The Black game, Ellic Howe, 1982
17. Black Propaganda in the Second world war, Stanley Newcourt-Nowodworski, 2005, p 113
18. Black Boomerang, Sefton Delmer, 1962, P146. A joint British and American production, a newspaper headed Nachrichten fur die Truppe was produced virtually daily from April 1944 until the very end of the war. It was spread by the RAF but mainly by the USAF Production peaked at about two million in November 1944. It was “grey” in character, ie not openly acknowledged as an Allied production, and even some American troops in France thought it was a German effort
20. Meaning Techniques and Methods of Political Warfare 1942
22. Rumor and Reflection, Bernard Berenson, 1952
25. A right wing political movement who claim in their manifesto to represent the indigenous people of Britain. http://www. infidelsofbritain.mysite.com/rhetoric.htm
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