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THESIS

**STRATEGIC PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS
CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT: WHY IS IT TAKING
SO LONG?**

by

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December 2020

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DEVELOPMENT: WHY IS IT TAKING SO LONG?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

This research project explores causes and effects of the events that led to the repeated failed efforts to develop a Strategic Psychological Operations (PSYOP) Capability. Multiple efforts to materialize the proposed capability development failed as they were initially outlined in the 1985 PSYOP Master Plan, in the 1990 revised PSYOP Master Plan, and in numerous subsequent research findings. Government officials recognized challenges from the changing geopolitical conditions and the importance of dominating the information domain but failed to promptly develop the capability needed to meet the new challenges. The renewed national security policies, which focused on the near-peer competition followed by countering violent extremist organizations, demanded the need to fill the missing capability gap, but the efforts to develop a strategic PSYOP capability stalled, which this thesis addresses.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASD SO/LIC	Assistant to Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict
CIAR	Center for Information Analysis and Response
COL	Colonel
CSCC	Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication
CTCC	Counterterrorism Communication Center
DOD	Department of Defense
DPA	Defense Public Affairs
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
GEC	Global Engagement Center
GSEC	Global Strategic Engagement Center
IIA	Inform and Influence Activity
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JCS	Joint Chief of Staff
JPOC	Joint Psychological Operations Center
LTC	Lieutenant Colonel
MISOC	Military Information Support Operations Command
MIS	Military Information Support
MISO	Military Information Support Operations
NPS	Naval Postgraduate School
NSDD	National Security Decision Directives
OSI	Office of Strategic Influence
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
SOF	Special Operations Forces
USG	United States Government
USIA	United States Information Agency
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command

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I. BASELINE ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS CAPABILITY

This chapter introduces the concept of *Strategic PSYOP Capability* and presents advocating arguments for the capability development. It examines the current doctrinal definition of strategic PSYOP capability and accounts historical milestones of efforts to define the concept.

It further explores the intricate nature of the strategic PSYOP capability by examining strategic effects of tactical and operational PSYOP capabilities. It explores the limits of strategic effects of other capabilities and establishes key characteristics that are unique to the strategic PSYOP capability.

Finally, this chapter aims to establish a baseline assessment of the strategic PSYOP capability by identifying key characteristics to facilitate further investigation of the research question.

A. BACKGROUND

In 1983, two world superpowers were still vying for ideologically driven geopolitical dominance since the end of World War II. While maintaining their nuclear arsenals as key deterrence components, both the United States and the Soviet Union continued to grow their respective military spending to remain relevant in the arms race. President Ronald Reagan's administration ramped up military expenditure under the Reagan Doctrine to militarily pressure the Soviets so they could be contained and eventually defeated. However, persistent Soviet propaganda and disinformation operations against the U.S. continued to undermine our foreign policy goals.¹ To counter the pervasive Soviet influence activities, the Reagan administration emphasized the

¹ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., "No More Tactical Information Detachments: U.S. Military Psychological Operations in Transition," in *Psychological Operations: Principles and Case Studies*, eds. Frank L. Goldstein and Benjamin F. Findley, Jr. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 17.

importance of the U.S. Psychological Operations capabilities to “support national security objectives in all legal and proper areas.”²

With its emphasis on strategic application of all available information capabilities, several presidential mandates were issued to directly provide guidelines for the development of a strategic PSYOP capability. The 1985 PSYOP Master Plan outlined key proposals to meet the new defense capability requirement. The goal was to devise the strategic application of PSYOP capabilities at all levels of conflict, as well as during peace time. However, many questioned the proposals, and they were under the intense bureaucratic scrutiny driven by different interests, bargaining, ideas and beliefs of various stakeholders. Since then, several other significant efforts followed on every turn of the important geopolitical environment, but none materialized as they were originally envisioned in 1985.

Today, nearly four decades later and after the initial recognition of the capability gap, conversation about strategic PSYOP capability development continues.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

This research project intends to identify and analyze factors that caused the long stalemate of the capability development process. However, before seeking an answer, I believe a deliberate process to establish the legitimacy of the subject in question is necessary. Because, without answering what *is Strategic PSYOP Capability*, and validating arguments for the need of such capability, efforts to find answers to the main question may be premature and incomplete. For this reason, this thesis is structured to answer several predetermined questions that lead to the findings that will serve to answer the last but the main question. The following questions are designed to provide answers for the initial prompt and validity.

- What key characteristics define the strategic PSYOP capability?

² Paddock, Jr., 17.

- What geopolitical conditions and challenges demand the employment of strategic PSYOP capability?
- What were the past efforts to respond to the calls for strategic PSYOP capability development?

Finally, and after examining the previous prompts, this thesis seeks to answer the main research question:

- Why, despite continued recommendations and efforts, has the strategic PSYOP capability development failed?

C. RESEARCH APPROACH AND SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

This thesis relies on the qualitative and comparative analysis of historical events, and case studies. Due to the exploratory nature of the research project, this thesis provides literature reviews as the source of material for discussion. After a thorough examination of the materials, this thesis seeks to validate the need for the proposed capability development and presents key finding in the form of commentary for observations, rather than conclusions for recommendations.

The first chapter defines the term *Strategic PSYOP Capability* by referencing current doctrine and by analyzing the historical efforts to identify key characteristics of the capability. This chapter also examines the strategic effects of the tactical and operational PSYOP capabilities in order to delineate the scope of the strategic PSYOP capability. Advocating arguments are presented to build the case for the rationales in the discourse of the strategic capability development.

The second chapter examines geopolitical conditions that prompts demand for the strategic PSYOP capability development. It examines the conditions during the Reagan administration that prompted the strategic response to Soviet global influence activities. Efforts to counter the Jihadi propaganda at the turn of the global war on terror (GWOT) are examined to identify conditions that created demand for the strategic PSYOP capability. Operational environment similarities from the two previous periods of conflicts

are compared to the current shifting dynamics in the discourse of national strategy, both to meet the challenges from the terrorist organizations and the rise of near-peer competition.

The third chapter analyzes devised efforts to counter the growing threats in the information domain. Analyses of PSYOP Master Plans of 1985 and 1990, attempted creation of the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI), and the interagency efforts to establish a degree of strategic responses provide rationales for repeated efforts to counter threats in the information domain over decades.

The culminating fourth chapter identifies and analyzes factors that caused the continued efforts to develop a strategic PSYOP capability. Key findings are provided to serve as sources to formulate final observations to offer opportunities for a continued pursuit of strategic PSYOP capability development.

D. CURRENT DOCTRINE REVIEW: STRATEGIC APPLICATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS CAPABILITY

The keystone publication U.S. Army Psychological Operations, Field Manual 3-53 Change 1, *Military Information Support Operations*, describes one of the key PSYOP missions' as its capability utilization in support of commanders, partners, and other supported agencies to achieve their desired psychological effects on populations at all levels of war.³ It further stipulates that PSYOP forces

conduct interagency-intergovernmental support in support of non-DOD information and public diplomacy efforts to communicate the U.S. narrative, and further regional, interagency partner, and country team initiatives. Interagency-intergovernmental support leverages regional expertise, planning capability, and media knowledge to support non-DOD information efforts to convey the U.S. narrative and further regional and country team initiatives and strategic communication. Interagency-intergovernmental support facilitates non-DOD missions that support the geographic combatant commander's (GCC's) theater campaign plan (TCP), DSPD, and Department of State (DOS) programs and activities.⁴

³ Department of the Army. *Military Information Support Operations*, FM 3-53, C1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2013), https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=102936.

⁴ Department of the Army, 12.

U.S. Army PSYOP fulfills its strategic mission requirements by providing interagency-intergovernmental support through military information missions. The three distinct PSYOP missions are depicted in the following diagram (Figure 1).

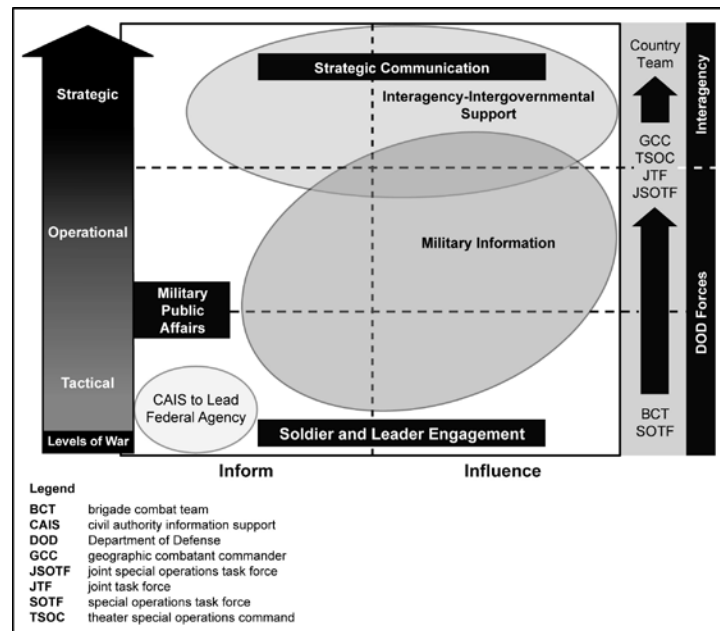


Figure 1. U.S. Army MISO Missions.⁵

The Joint Publication 3-13.2 Change 1, *Military Information Support Operations*, establishes the scope of the joint PSYOP capability at all levels of war as it supports national policy and commanders' objectives. It also points to the importance of the PSYOP role in strategic communications as a key capability that serves to influence foreign audiences in support of the U.S. strategic objectives. While discussing the applicability of the PSYOP to different levels of war, the joint publication indicates that

MIS forces normally plan and execute operations in support of operational and/or tactical-level headquarters with a defined joint operations area. However, MIS forces may support USG departments and agencies, GCCs, or multinational partners. This is often the case when supporting a broad USG approach designed to achieve strategic objectives. MISO that support strategic objectives are often transregional in character and normally

⁵ Source: Department of the Army, *Military Information Support Operations*, 1–3.

involve detailed coordination with one or more GCCs and interagency partners.⁶

In conclusion, current U.S. military doctrine defines the psychological operations capabilities as inherently military that conduct operations in support of the commanders and interagency efforts to achieve national policy goals at all levels of war and peace.

E. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following subsections identify characteristics of the strategic PSYOP capability by exploring historical evolution of the concept. It discusses strategic implication of tactical and operational application of the PSYOP capability in order to distinguish unique features of the strategic capability from others. Advocating arguments for the development and establishment of a strategic PSYOP capability are presented to illustrate propositions for the strategic capability development.

During his address to the British Royal United Service Institution in 1952, Dick Crossman, the British pioneer of Psychological Warfare, observed that “by strategic propaganda I mean propaganda which is spread to the whole of the enemy nation.”⁷ His assertion was confirmation of the battle proven effectiveness of psychological operations during World War II, while offering wide application of its capabilities for the looming Cold War.

The recognition of psychological operations’ relevancy after World War II led to the establishment of Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) in 1951. However, significant conversations to incorporate psychological operations capabilities into the strategic planning process started to take shape in the early 1970s and during the final years of the

⁶ Department of Defense, *Military Information Support Operations*, JP 3-13.2, Change 1 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2011).
https://jpsc.ndu.edu/Portals/72/Documents/JC2IOS/Additional_Reading/1C1_JP_3-13-2.pdf.

⁷ William E. Daugherty, “The Creed of a Modern Propaganda,” in *A Psychological Warfare Casebook*, eds. William E. Daugherty and Morris Janowitz (Bethesda, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University, 1958), 37.

Viet Nam War.⁸ As Raymond J. Barrett, senior advisor of the Department of State to the Army's John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center observed in his article of 1972, "efforts to delineate the concept of psychological operations have been impeded by a reluctance to acknowledge PSYOP as an instrument of strategy," until then, psychological operations capabilities were heavily employed in tactical and operational level of war.⁹ Barrett began his investigation on the possibility of expanding the use of PSYOP capabilities beyond the traditional employments. He highlights the importance of PSYOP capabilities in the context of the national power elements and offers recommendations on how psychological operations capabilities can be used to maximize operational outcomes in the context of supporting the national strategy.¹⁰

During the same period, in an attempt to highlight the importance of psychological effects on war, the Joint Chiefs of Staff defined military operations to, "include psychological warfare and, in addition encompass those political, military, economic and ideological actions planned and conducted to create in neutral, friendly foreign groups the emotions, attitudes, or behavior to support the achievement of national objectives."¹¹ It continued to formulate the "concept of the strategic Psychological Operations as 'aimed at influencing and shaping decision-makers' power to govern or control their followers."¹² Barret criticized this definition as too vague and over inclusive and proposed to develop a more precise definition and a workable concept.

The 1984 DOD Directive S-3321.1 directed the authority to conduct overt PSYOP in peace time and in contingencies short of declared war to every Unified and Specified

⁸ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, (Carlisle Barracks. Pennsylvania: USAWC Strategy Research Project, 2003), <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/gough.pdf>.

⁹ Raymond J. Barrett, "PSYOP. What Is It? And What We Should Do About It," in *The Art and Science of Psychological Operations: Case Studies of Military Application Volume 1*, eds. Ronald De McLaurin, Carl F. Rosenthal, and Sarah A. Skillings (Washington, DC: American Institute for Research, 1976) 40–46.

¹⁰ Barrett, 40–46.

¹¹ Barrett, 46.

¹² Barrett, 46.

Commander-in-Chiefs.¹³ An overt PSYOP was defined as operations coordinated with the State Department through each region's Country Team's (CT) approval. The United States Information Agency (USIA) then would oversee individual programs to prevent dissemination of conflicting information. The DOD Directive stipulated that the military PSYOP would and should fill information capability vacuum not covered by other government agencies, and specifically pertaining to the military operations.

The 1985 PSYOP Master Plan which followed DOD Directive S-3321.1 and the subsequent 1990 PSYOP Master Plan emphasized the role of PSYOP as a "strategic instrument of national security policy."¹⁴ They also established psychological operations as "an inherent responsibility of military commanders," and suggested "consideration and use of PSYOP in peacetime, crisis, and war."¹⁵

The report of the Defense Science Board Task Force of 2000 distinguishes inherent characteristics among different levels of PSYOP functions. The report characterizes the strategic PSYOP capability as

a permanent PSYOP staff organization under the direction of ASD SO/LIC, will work closely with U.S. Department of State Public Diplomacy staff members. Their primary purpose, in accordance with Presidential Decision Directive 68, will be to assist the Department of State in developing strategic International Public information plans and programs. Additionally, this strategic PSYOP planning staff will also be able to de-conflict and synchronize the Theater CINC's PSYOP scheme with the strategic International Public Information plan. The link between the strategic PSYOP planning staff and the theaters will occur through the Joint PSYOP Headquarters. For the first time, this headquarters will bring all the military PSYOP assets under one organization. Commanded by a flag officer, the Joint PSYOP Headquarters will maintain open contracts with civilian advertising and marketing firms for assistance in PSYOP product development and links with members of academia studying the potential

¹³ Department of Defense, *Overt Psychological Operations Conducted by The Military Services in Peacetime and in Contingencies Short of Declared War*, DOD Directive S-3321.1 (Washington, DC: Deputy Secretary of Defense, 1984), <https://documents2.theblackvault.com/documents/dod/18-M-0802.pdf>.

¹⁴ Department of Defense, *DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1985 and DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1990* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1985 and 1990).

¹⁵ Department of Defense, *DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1985 and DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1990*.

impact of information on the attitudes and behaviors of foreign target audiences.¹⁶

This capability definition embraces all aspects of military psychological operations, across all spectrum of organizational functions, and in various geopolitical environments as depicted in the following diagram (Figure 2).

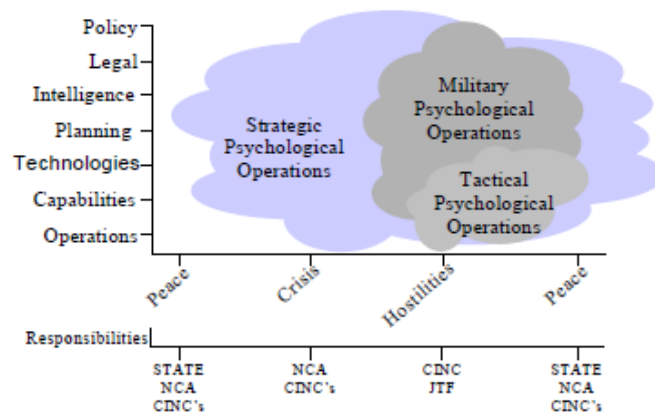


Figure 2. The Functioning Scope of PSYOP.¹⁷

While recognizing the growing interoperability and blurring lines of distinction between different levels of PSYOP functions, the report aims to provide a workable solution for the separate development of a strategic PSYOP capability. It also invokes the definition of the strategic PSYOP capability as “having global implications and is planned, initiated, and executed at the national level,” as outlined in the Presidential Decision Directive 68 (PDD 68).

The Joint Publication 3-53, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*, defines strategic PSYOP capability as “international information activities conducted by U.S. Government (USG) agencies to influence foreign attitudes, perceptions, and behavior in

¹⁶ Department of Defense, *The Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) in Time of Military Conflict* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2000), <http://iwar.org.uk/psyops/resources/dsb/dsb-psyop.pdf>.

¹⁷ Source: Department of Defense, 9.

favor of U.S. goals and objectives during peacetime and in times of conflict.”¹⁸ It further indicates that “these programs are conducted predominantly outside the military arena but can utilize Department of Defense (DOD) assets.”¹⁹ The following categorization of PSYOP clearly separates strategic capability characteristics from other two levels of operations (Figure 3).

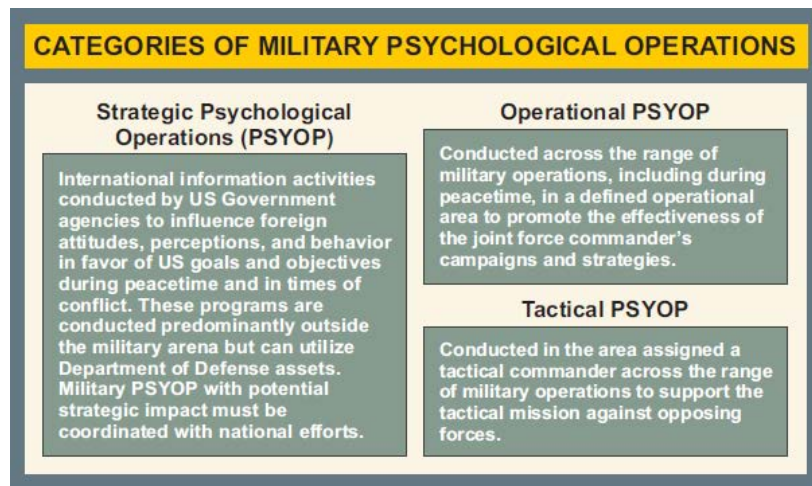


Figure 3. Categories of Military Psychological Operations.²⁰

The Joint Publication 3-13.2, *Psychological Operations*, which replaced JP 3-53 in 2010 defines strategic PSYOP as a capability developed to support all needed government agencies, functioning combatant commands, and partner nations. It further offers explanation of the strategic capability as “activities focused on achieving broad U.S. and multinational objectives in regions of the globe with diverse audiences.”²¹ The strategic character of “PSYOP forces constitute one DOD capability applied as part of a broader

¹⁸ Department of Defense, *Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*, JP 3-53, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2003), https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB177/02_psyop-jp-3-53.pdf.

¹⁹ Department of Defense, ix.

²⁰ Source: Department of Defense, I-4.

²¹ Department of Defense, *Psychological Operations*, Joint Publication 3-13.2, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2010), <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3-13-2.pdf>.

USG approach. PSYOP applied at the strategic level are often transregional in character and may involve detailed coordination with one or more GCCs and the interagency.”²²

Others, like Richard B. Davenport, while recognizing the need for more coordinated U.S. strategic influence capabilities as repeatedly mentioned in previous findings and reports, suggest that PSYOP capabilities lead a Joint Influence Warfare Element (JIWE) in “providing the highest level of strategic influence representation at the National Security Council (NSC), DOD, and State Departments levels.”²³

1. Strategic Implication of Tactical and Operational PSYOP

It is difficult to clearly delineate operational characteristics of different levels of PSYOP capabilities solely based on effects achieved. For example, the Army established several tactical level Mobile Radio Broadcasting Companies (MRBC) during World War II. These tactical PSYOP teams were attached to frontline combat units to support the tactical and operational operations, and later supported theater level strategic needs.²⁴ Therefore, arguments are made that a tactical or operational PSYOP capability can be used to achieve strategic goals as “an individual or adversary leadership also may be a strategic PSYOP target.”²⁵ This latter assessment further complicates efforts to define strategic PSYOP capability and its subsequent development.

As William F. Johnston points out in his article, *The Art and Science of Psychological Operations: case studies of military application*, “tactical PSYOP should support the achievement of strategic objectives.”²⁶ And the editors of the research

²² Department of Defense, I-4.

²³ Richard B. Davenport, “The Need for an Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, 88, 1st Quarter, (2018), <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Publications/Article/1412317/the-need-for-an-innovative-joint-psychological-warfare-force-structure>.

²⁴ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 5.

²⁵ Department of Defense, *Psychological Operations*, I-4.

²⁶ William F. Johnston, “Neglected Deterrent: Psychological Operations in Liberation Wars,” in *The Art and Science of Psychological Operations: Case Studies of Military Application Volume 1*, eds. Ronald De McLaurin, Carl F. Rosenthal, and Sarah A. Skillings (Washington, DC: American Institute for Research, 1976), 400.

acknowledge the overlapping effects of different levels of operations, they also argue that “a basic conceptual difference between communications developed to support long-range state interests and those used to support immediate, combat missions are essential.”²⁷ This differentiation is one of the key characteristics of the strategic level of psychological operations.²⁸ Consequently, much of the military psychological operations conducted during World War II, the Korean War, and the Viet Nam War were operational and tactical in nature and narrowly focused its effects in the immediate theater of operations.²⁹ These operations were hardly intended to gain a long term effect that supported national strategy and objectives.

Dissemination methods play an important role in determining the operational levels of PSYOP. However, a disseminating platform can be used alternatively to gain desired effects at different levels of operations. For example, the creation of 1st Radio Broadcasting and Leaflet (RB&L) Group at Fort Riley during the Korean War was designed to meet strategic needs in the theater, but the same dissemination platform was also used to achieve tactical and operational effects on the battle fronts.³⁰ Other dissemination platforms are inherent to a specific level of operations, as noted by William E. Daugherty, for example, radio can be used both for tactical and strategical purposes. In contrast, media such as leaflets can produce other than intended effects due to their potential to inadvertently reach beyond the targeted geographical area.³¹

A cautious approach is required to select an appropriate method of dissemination due to some platforms’ ability to reach beyond the intended target audiences and produce

²⁷ Ronald De McLaurin, Daniel C. Pollock, Carl F. Rosenthal, and Sarah A. Skillings, “Tactical PSYOP and Strategic Objectives,” in *The Art and Science of Psychological Operations: Case Studies of Military Application Volume 1*, eds. Ronald De McLaurin, Carl F. Rosenthal, and Sarah A. Skillings (Washington, DC: American Institute for Research, 1976), 400–401.

²⁸ McLaurin, Pollock, Rosenthal, and Skillings, 400–401.

²⁹ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 9–10.

³⁰ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., “No More Tactical Information Detachments: U.S. Military Psychological Operations in Transition,”²⁷.

³¹ William E. Daugherty, “The Creed of a Modern Propaganda,”^{37–38}.

unintended effects. In this regard, the distinction of strategic PSYOP capability from other levels of operations is difficult to assess based on a dissemination method's capability. As noted in the Report of Defense Science Board, the distinction between different levels of PSYOP is blurred because of the broader audiences' ability to access instantaneously to the dissemination platforms, while the messages are not intended for certain recipients, it may be impossible to localize any information campaign.³²

The Joint Publication 3-13.2 Change 1, *Military Information Support Operations*, recognizes these limitations as the understanding for the definition of the strategic PSYOP capability evolves.

Joint MISO support policy and commanders' objectives from strategic to tactical levels. The impact of these operations at one level may have significant implications at other levels. Although military leadership and local key communicators are examples of TAs engaged at the operational and tactical levels that are capable of affecting the accomplishment of a strategic objective.³³

Nevertheless, two metrics for the strategic PSYOP capability can be inferred to define its inherent characteristics: that the effects of strategic PSYOP capability project and support long-term national strategy objectives, and the defining scope of dissemination methods matter. These two metrics serve to separate different roles and responsibilities of three levels of PSYOP as they are outlined in the publication.³⁴

2. Advocacy for the Strategic PSYOP Capability Development

Ideas for the strategic PSYOP capability development were taking shape after the end of World War II. Richard H. S. Crossman, also known to his colleagues as Dick Crossman was a renowned propagandist during World War II. Many of his works were regarded as crucial for the development of the psychological warfare in general, and served

³² Department of Defense, *The Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) in Time of Military Conflict*, 11.

³³ Department of Defense, *Military Information Support Operations*, viii.

³⁴ Department of Defense, viii.

as foundation to the American psychological operations during the conflict.³⁵ In his address to the British Royal United Service Institution in 1952, Crossman pointed out that, “the psychological warrior must regard himself as a part of the military organization, and all that he does must be fitted carefully and meticulously into the over-all strategy of war.”³⁶ During the same address, he also notes that, “to be effective, propaganda operations must be related to strategic requirements and prepared where policy and higher military strategy are known.”³⁷

Others, since the years of Crossman, have advocated for the development of a strategic PSYOP capability to meet the challenges of changing geopolitical environments, especially during the final years of the Cold War. Those efforts resulted in the publication of 1985 PSYOP Master Plan and the subsequent revised version in 1990. During those active years of strategic PSYOP capability development, COL Richard Brauer and Dr. Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., were among the most notable advocates for the proposal.³⁸ They both advocated for an expansive role of psychological operations beyond battlefield effects.

Dr. Carnes Lord, in his paper titled *The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy* emphasizes the need for the PSYOP capability integration at the strategic planning process. He argues that until the final years of the Cold War, the scope of PSYOP was too narrowly focused on battlefield effects, ignoring its potential and critical capacity for producing strategic effects when incorporated at national level planning process.³⁹ His suggestions resonated with the main proposals outlined in the 1985 and the 1990 PSYOP

³⁵ William E. Daugherty, “The Creed of a Modern Propaganda,”³⁵.

³⁶ Richard H. S. Crossman, “Psychological Warfare,” *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 97 (1952): 319–332.

³⁷ Crossman, 319–332.

³⁸ Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach* (Washington, DC: National Defense University and National Strategy Information Center, 1989), xvii.

³⁹ Carnes Lord, “The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy,” in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, eds. Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord, (Washington, DC: National Defense University and National Strategy Information Center, 1989), 19.

Master Plans. As he witnessed stalled efforts of capability development and necessary structural changes to accommodate the proposals, he concluded that

the entire area of strategic war planning is of critical importance in this context, since it is the point at which the military, diplomatic, and psychological-political components of national strategy most closely converge. Any effort to enhance and better integrate strategic planning at the national level, as recommended by influential voices in Congress and elsewhere, needs to focus on the difficult substantive and procedural issues involved in war planning. More generally recognized is the need for integrated interagency planning in crisis situations; but here as well the potential of psychological-political warfare seems not to have been fully realized.⁴⁰

After the collapse of Soviet Union, debates for a need to develop strategic PSYOP capability continued. Few members within the military took the lead in recommending for the continued efforts of the strategic PSYOP capability development. In his academic work, MAJ Maurice A. Lescault, Jr. argues military PSYOP units should be “used as a true strategic asset to achieve national security objectives.”⁴¹ He emphasizes the use of PSYOP as “one method to harness the true power of information and direct it toward achieving U.S. national strategic objectives.”⁴²

Kathy J. Perry argues that after the successful first Gulf War, the renewed interest in Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) prompted acceptance for the justification of use of PSYOP as a strategic tool. In her view, PSYOP is the right tool to meet the challenges of the changing geopolitical context, while adapting to the technological advancements of the coming century. She concludes the use of PSYOP as a *strategic information capability* is the key to achieve support to national security objectives.⁴³

⁴⁰ Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, 30–31.

⁴¹ Maurice A. Lescault, Jr., *The Power of Persuasion: Army PSYOP Control and Execution Entering the Third Wave*, (Charlottesville, VA: The Judge Advocate General’s School, 1996), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA438083>

⁴² Lescault, Jr., 41.

⁴³ Kathy J. Perry, *The Use of Psychological Operations as a Strategic Tool*, (Carlisle Barracks: PA, U.S. Army War College, 2000), <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA377939>.

The release of the Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force in 2000, marked the new era for renewed interest in strategic PSYOP capability development. The board stresses that the use of PSYOP is better suited for before and after any military conflicts since it can favorably shape the context of military actions, serve to amplify deterrence mechanisms, and achieve approving public opinion.⁴⁴

The shift in focus on national security strategy after the 9/11 brought urgent need for the application of the PSYOP for immediate battlefield effects. However, even after the short-lived attempt to establish OSI within the Pentagon for better strategic planning coordination, the spirit of advocacy for the development of strategic PSYOP capability continued.⁴⁵

Many who advocated for the development of strategic PSYOP capability during the early years of the GWOT formulated their ideas around three topics: capability recognition, doctrine review, and permanent staffing. In his monograph, LTC Dave Acevedo points to the shifting national security priorities as the main cause of lost interest and recognition of PSYOP as strategic tool.⁴⁶ LTC Christopher L. Leyda argues that while the doctrine “identified the need for close theater and interagency coordination, it failed to clearly define or explain the procedures for integrating theater strategic PSYOP initiatives and activities at the national level.”⁴⁷ Around the same time, LTC Susan L. Gough identifies employing full-time staffs as the key for establishing a robust strategic PSYOP capability.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Department of Defense, *The Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) in Time of Military Conflict*, 2.

⁴⁵ Christopher L. Leyda, *Joint Doctrine to Integrate Theater Strategic Psychological Operations at the National Level: Searching for Needles in a Haystack*, (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2002), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a409154.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Dave Acevedo, *Strategic PSYOP: Coordinating Worldwide Psychological Operations – Is There a National Requirement for a Strategic Psychological Operations Organization?* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army School for Advanced Military Studies, 2003), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a431000.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Christopher L. Leyda, *Joint Doctrine to Integrate Theater Strategic Psychological Operations at the National Level: Searching for Needles in a Haystack*, 12.

⁴⁸ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 34.

Throughout decades of witnessing the importance of the psychological operations in peace time and war, many authors, practitioners, and members of working group supported the idea of broader application of PSYOP capabilities, and they continued to advocate for the development of strategic enterprise. However, these efforts brought no substantial progress to the comprehensive capability utilization since then.

Recent suggestions retrofitted by Richard B. Davenport in 2018 advocated for the establishment of sub-unified influence command in order “to coordinate the proper aligning, synchronizing, harmonizing, unifying, integrating, improving, countering, collaborating, directing, and de-conflicting of all forms of influence and persuasion efforts among all elements of DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic) and JIIMs(Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational).”⁴⁹ As the geopolitical environments change and technological advancements happen overnight, the advocacy for the strategic PSYOP capability continues on in small circles of practitioners and scholars.

F. CONCLUSION: CHARACTERISTICS OF STRATEGIC PSYOP CAPABILITY

Several differing definitions and nuanced interpretations make up the literature of the strategic PSYOP capability, but the following key characteristics are recognized by many as a unique component of the capability.

- Capability to respond and incorporate into the national strategy dialogue.
- Capability to influence broader spectrum of audiences.
- Capability to support planning and execution for various war or peace time information campaigns.
- Capability to interoperate with various intra and interagency departments to support planning and execution processes.

⁴⁹ Richard B. Davenport, “The Need for An Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure,” 68.

- Capability to maintain operations for long term effects.
- Capability to amplify deterrence mechanism pre-conflict and shape the information environment during and after the conflict.

Developing these key characteristics are crucial to meet the challenges of the changing geopolitical environment, meet new requirements of technological advancements, and adapt to continuously morphing social trends.

II. THREAT AND CAPABILITY-BASED APPROACH DEVELOPMENTS: DEMAND FOR THE STRATEGIC PSYOP CAPABILITY

This chapter examines the underlying characteristics of threat-based and capability-based approach that guide the development of new capability. It highlights conditions in which the demand for the strategic PSYOP capability arise, from the last decade of Cold War to recent periods that prompted the need for U.S. strategic countermeasure responses. The resulting examination would then serve to compare and contrast similarities between the past and the current conditions and highlight the importance of strategic PSYOP capability development through the periods of Revolution in Military Affairs after the end of Cold War. The objective is to analyze how external conditions and internal innovative approaches demand for strategic PSYOP capability development.

In this chapter, three distinctive geopolitical conditions are analyzed. It starts by describing the underlying characteristics of Soviet propaganda during the final decade of Cold War that prompted U.S. strategic countermeasures. Next, similar analysis is presented on Jihadi propaganda during periods of War on Terror. Subsequently, it will analyze characteristics of present *information warfare* conditions in the context of great power competition, particularly those involving Russia and China.

Finally, this chapter concludes by identifying conditions that prompted the efforts to develop strategic responses relying on psychological operations capabilities in defense planning.

A. SOVIET INFLUENCE ACTIVITIES DURING FINAL YEARS OF COLD WAR

Soviets employed a variety of influence activities in support of their foreign policy goals, usually through means of tarnishing images of their rivals.⁵⁰ These activities were

⁵⁰ Dennis Kux, "Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation: Overview and Assessment," *Parameters*, XV, no. 4 (January 1985). <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA521468>.

categorically placed under three modes: black, grey, and white operations.⁵¹ While black and grey influence modes fall under the so called *Active Measures* or covert activities, all Soviet Political Influence Activities, to include overt operations, were under the authority of Politburo Approved Programs. These influence activities intended to support the Soviet policy objectives through close coordination in strategy and tactics as shown in the following diagram (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Soviet Active Measures.⁵²

Various governmental institutions and apparatus were involved in Soviet Active Measures and Propaganda. While covert activities were under the oversight of the KGB, other less secretive or overt activities were executed through interagency coordination to maximize efficiency.⁵³ These agencies and government outlets used many types of

⁵¹ Herbert Romerstein, "Soviet Active Measures and Propaganda: "New Thinking" and Influence Activities in the Gorbachev Era," in *Psychological Operations and Political Warfare in Long-Term Strategic Planning*, ed. Janos Radvanyi (New York, NY: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990), 36.

⁵² Source: *Soviet Active Measures Senate Hearing*, 98th Cong. (1985) (summary of the hearing), 3.

⁵³ *Soviet Active Measures Senate Hearing*, 98th Cong. (1985) (statement of Robert M. Gates, Deputy Director for Intelligence, CIA), 4.

communication platforms, such as radios, magazines, books, and newspapers to deliberately disseminate disinformation.⁵⁴

Notable Soviet Influence Activities, include disinformation operations and forgeries circulated in Africa and in Europe of falsely accusing the U.S. intelligence agencies' plan to overthrow the Angolan, Seychelles, Ghana, and Greek governments in the early 1980s. False accusations of the U.S. involvement in the papal assassination controversy in 1983 was another high profile disinformation operation by the Soviets in early 80's.⁵⁵ In his testimony to Congress at the Senate Hearing on Soviet Active Measures in 1985, then former Deputy Director of CIA Robert M. Gates said, "Active Measures are used to exploit vulnerabilities in West European political life by feeding ideas, guidance, and financial support to disaffected elements of the politically active public."⁵⁶ Former Under Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger compared the Soviet Active Measures to World War II psychological warfare operations.⁵⁷

Soviet Influence Activities did not have much of their intended effects on Western democracies. Geopolitical conditions of bipolar power structure during the Cold War made the Soviet propaganda easily identifiable. The public faith in government institutions was high during this period, and the free press in the West created effective filters to scrutinize Soviet propaganda activities targeted on wary Western populations.⁵⁸ However, the effects of Soviet disinformation activities in the Third World were substantial. Looser professional journalism standards, susceptibility to financial incentives, and politicization of media

⁵⁴ Herbert Romerstein, "Soviet Active Measures and Propaganda: "New Thinking" and Influence Activities in the Gorbachev Era," 36.

⁵⁵ Dennis Kux, "Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation: Overview and Assessment," 19.

⁵⁶ *Soviet Active Measures Senate Hearing*, 98th Cong. (1985) (statement of Robert M. Gates, Deputy Director for Intelligence, CIA), 4.

⁵⁷ Lawrence Eagleburger, "Unacceptable Intervention: Soviet Active Measures," *NATO Review*, 31, no. 1 (April 1983): 6–7.

⁵⁸ Dennis Kux, "Soviet Active Measures and Disinformation: Overview and Assessment," 19.

contributed to the compounding effects of Soviet disinformation operations in the Third World nations to antagonize the U.S. and the West.⁵⁹

Soviet Influence Activities were heavily focused on Western Europe and America, but their strategic reach was truly global.⁶⁰ From the valleys of Afghanistan to the jungles of Panama, and from the farmlands in South East Asia to the modern mega cities in Western European countries, the globalized Soviet disinformation operations were actively seeking to influence target audiences for the benefit of their status as a world superpower.⁶¹ The main security threat to the U.S. during the Cold War was evident, and the demand to counter such enemy tactics was urgent. The Soviet Politburo emphasized strategic influence activities, persisting in their global operations until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁶²

B. JIHADI PROPAGANDA IN THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

At the outset of war on terror after the events of 9/11, a shift in security focus on counterterrorism put emphasis on countering violent extremist organizations' narratives. Jihadi propaganda exploitations saw a steady increase in their frequency and impact on targeted population as operations for GWOT waged on. Jihadi movements have three distinct strategic communication goals: to legitimize their ideology, propagate their cause, and intimidate their opponents.⁶³ Successful recruitment efforts and popular support of their cause are the direct result of their influence activity. Militant groups' use of online

⁵⁹ Kux, 19.

⁶⁰ *Soviet Active Measures Senate Hearing*, 98th Cong. (1985) (statement of Robert M. Gates, Deputy Director for Intelligence, CIA and James H. Geer, Assistant Director for Intelligence, FBI), 28.

⁶¹ Herbert Romerstein, "Soviet Active Measures and Propaganda: "New Thinking" and Influence Activities in the Gorbachev Era," 52–53.

⁶² Alexander M. Perkins, Master Thesis, "Soviet Active Measures Reborn for the 21st Century: What is to Be Done?" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2018), <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1069692.pdf>.

⁶³ Steven R. Corman and Jill S. Schiefelbein, *Communication and Media Strategy in the Jihadi War of Ideas*, 0601 (Arizona: Arizona State University, 2006), <http://csc.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/119.pdf>.

media platforms was nothing new, but their social media networking platforms exploitation blossomed at the height of ISIS online influence activities.⁶⁴

Jihadists use similar methods and techniques of communication used by many institutions and corporations.⁶⁵ They individualize messages targeting particular demographic groups to increase their chance of successful recruitment. ISIS was known to manage a group solely dedicated to online influence activities. About 500 to 2,000 active online members formed the *online battalion* to spread their ideology and recruit new fighters.⁶⁶ Even though online media platforms provide faster and more pervasive access to their target audiences, Jihadi groups also use traditional communication methods such as magazines. *Inspire* produced by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, *Azan* by Taliban in Pakistan, and *Dabiq* by ISIS are a few examples of jihadi groups attempts to spread and legitimize their ideology by establishing their own communication platforms.⁶⁷

The success of jihadi propaganda is evidenced by the number of new ISIS recruits around the world as of December 2015. About 30,000 foreign terrorist fighters joined the ISIS in Syria coming from at least 85 countries around the world.⁶⁸ These previous numbers are estimated to have reached around 40,000 in the past five years with almost 5,000 European citizens within their ranks.⁶⁹ The extent to which ISIS operates has become global. Their propaganda targets both the sympathizers and perceived enemies

⁶⁴ Adam Badawy and Emilio Ferrara, *The Rise of Jihadist Propaganda on Social Networks*, (Los Angeles, CA: Journal of Computational Social Science. University of Southern California, 2018), <https://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1702/1702.02263.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Steven R. Corman and Jill S. Schiefelbein, *Communication and Media Strategy in the Jihadi War of Ideas*, 2.

⁶⁶ Adam Badawy and Emilio Ferrara, *The Rise of Jihadist Propaganda on Social Networks*, 2.

⁶⁷ D.B. Skillicorn, *Empirical Assessment of al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Taliban Propaganda* (Canada: Queen's University, 2015), DOI 10.1109/ISI.2015.7165940.

⁶⁸ Efraim Benmelech and Esteban F. Klor, *What Explains the Flow of Foreign Fighters to ISIS?* (DeKalb, IL: Northwestern University, 2016), https://scholars.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/eklor/files/isis_february_14_2018.pdf.

⁶⁹ Francesco Milan, *The Return of ISIS? Jihadis Fleeing into Asia and Detainees in Syria and Iraq Pose a Greater Danger than Terrorists Returning Home*, (London, UK: King's College London and Institute of Strategic Studies, 2020), <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/the-return-of-isis-jihadis-fleeing-into-asia-and-detainees-in-syria-and-iraq-pose-a-greater-danger-than-terrorists-returning-home>.

alike across transnational boundaries. As depicted in the following schematic representation, jihadi propaganda target audiences are categorically labeled and matched to their overall narrative plan (Figure 5).

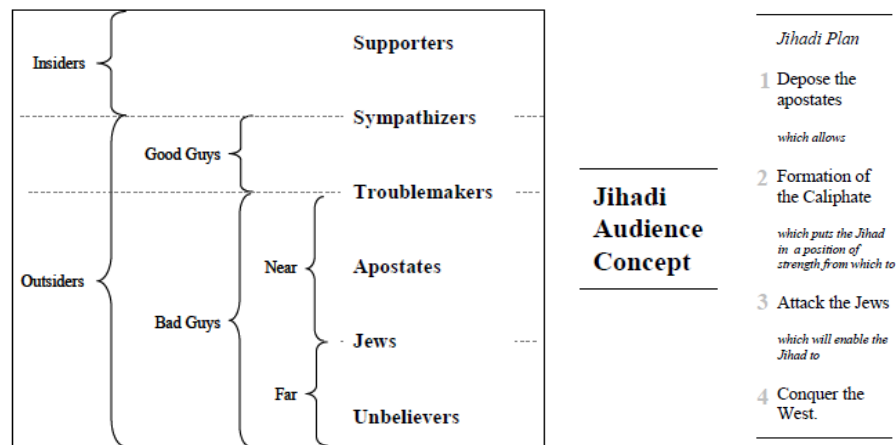


Figure 5. Jihadi Propaganda Plan and Audience Concept.⁷⁰

The jihadi propaganda has important strategic implication for the U.S. It requires a strategic response that must be focused for long-term effects. As foreign fighters returning to their home countries may pose direct risk of increase in domestic terrorism, they also act as a reference point of inspiration for those who seek to join their violent cause.⁷¹ Ideology is hard to eradicate, and as long as there is a susceptible audience and aspiring candidates for the jihadist' cause, it is likely that the fight against their ideology will require a long term response. Our enemies' ubiquitous use of messaging and media at the turn of the new millennia developed into a new security threat. What used to be a threat-based capability development required a renewed approach. It was no longer who, but where, how and what are the methodology used by our enemies that our countermeasures need to be focusing

⁷⁰ Source: Steven R. Corman and Jill S. Schiefelbein, *Communication and Media Strategy in the Jihadi War of Ideas*, 2.

⁷¹ Armed Conflict Survey, "ISIS Foreign Fighters After the Fall of the Caliphate," *Armed Conflict Survey*, 6:1 (May 2020): 24, DOI: 10.1080/23740973.2020.1761611.

on.⁷² Global reach of jihadi propaganda will require a strategic counter-response that will outlast their malign effects.

C. CONFLICT OF INFORMATION AND INFLUENCE IN THE ERA OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

The Russian government interfered in the 2016 presidential election in sweeping and systematic fashion.⁷³

—*The Mueller Report*, March 2019

Almost three decades after the end of Cold War and two decades into the war in Afghanistan, the shifting geopolitical environment is felt strongly. The Russian online influence operations delivered immeasurable but pervasive damaging effects during the 2016 presidential election cycle. According to the 2019 Special Counsel’s Report on *The Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election*, the Russian government sponsored Internet Research Agency intended to “sow discord in the U.S. political system through what it termed information warfare.”⁷⁴ Through its unsophisticated methods of online troll messaging techniques, they targeted unwitting American public to spread disinformation.⁷⁵ While measurable effects of the Russian influence activities during the 2016 presidential elections are hard to substantiate, the lingering effect on the general population’s attitude toward our political system is concerning. For example, research conducted by Ipsos before the 2018 mid-term elections showed only half of the U.S. population believed in the fairness of election system.⁷⁶ A

⁷² Scott Jasper, *Transforming defense capabilities: new approaches for international security* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 1–19.

⁷³ Department of Justice, *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference In the 2016 Presidential Election report*, (Washington, DC: Department of Justice, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/18/politics/full-mueller-report-pdf/index.html>.

⁷⁴ Department of Justice, 4.

⁷⁵ Department of Justice, 4.

⁷⁶ “Only Half of the American Population Believes Elections Are Fair and Open,” Ipsos Public Affairs, July 2018, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/half-of-Americans-believe-elections-are-fair>.

similar poll conducted by NPR/Marist during the same period also revealed that the half of the U.S. population did not trust in the fairness of the election system, compared to nearly two-third of population that were confident of the voting counts during the 2016 presidential elections.⁷⁷

Russia is not the only near-peer competitor country at the forefront of *information warfare* against the U.S. China is also under the suspicion of using nearly 2 million online trolls to shape the information environment favorable to their cause.⁷⁸ While the Chinese influence activity tactics are less hostile toward the U.S. compared to the more assertive Russian's, their operations are damaging to the whole ecosystem of free flow of ideas and speeches. The Chinese government's troll operations are mainly aimed at silencing domestic dissents and international critics. In doing so, they intend to divert international attention away from their state authoritarian practices. These *volunteer trolls* are most active when the Communist Party's reputation is compromised, and international scrutiny is on them in the news. The Chinese government uses nationalist rhetoric in order to defend from criticism of what they see as a danger to their regime's survival.⁷⁹ Trolls viciously attack, divert, discredit, and disengage from accusations of their critics.⁸⁰ They intend to promote their country's status as a reliable global partner abroad, rally domestic support, and support the communist regime's foreign policy goals.

Russia and China resort to online information warfare tactics to dissuade criticism and garner international support by attacking other nations critical of their regimes. Other

⁷⁷ Susan Milligan, "A Growing Lack of Faith in Elections," *USNews.com*, May 2019, <https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2019-05-10/after-russian-election-interference-americans-are-losing-faith-in-elections>.

⁷⁸ Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged Argument," *American Political Science Review*, 111, no. 3 (April 2017): 484, https://gking.harvard.edu/files/gking/files/how_the_chinese_government_fabricates_social_media_posts_for_strategic_distraction_not_engaged_argument.pdf.

⁷⁹ Joyce Lau, "Who Are the Chinese Trolls of the '50 Cent Army'?" *Voanews.com*, October 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/who-are-chinese-trolls-50-cent-army>.

⁸⁰ Jane Lytvynenko, and Craig Silverman, "Reddit Has Become a Battleground of Alleged Chinese Trolls," *Buzzfeed News*, March 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/reddit-coordinated-chinese-propaganda-trolls>.

less powerful countries hostile to the U.S. government, such as Iran and Venezuela, are teaming up with other more powerful revisionist states to discredit the U.S. geopolitical influence around the world.⁸¹

Strategic implication of revisionist states and their partnering states' *information warfare* activities against the U.S. is significant. Pew Research Center study in December of 2016 indicates about 64% of Americans think *fake news* has left them confused of basic facts.⁸² In a study conducted by Pew Research Center and Elon University's Imaging the Internet Center, over 80% of respondents in technology, academia, corporate, and government believed the impact of near-peer competitor states' ability to sow distrust among the American population would either continue to be a major issue or get worse in the next decade.⁸³

Quantifiable effects measurement of the Russian state sponsored troll operations and its reach to U.S. voters during 2016 U.S. presidential elections are difficult to compute, but its intended effects are visible in our daily interactions with others, on and offline. Our shared values are tainted, our tolerance for acceptance of different opinions are thinning, and our social division gaps continue to widen. Gaps in our political difference are widening without any sign of consensus, and political compromise is a bridge too far to cross over. It is the era of political stalemate and dissents. Counter measure capability is in demand, whether through threat or capability-based approach analysis.

⁸¹ Graham, Brookie, Kanishk Karan, and Ben Nimmo, "#TrollTracker: Twitter Troll Farm Archives Part One - Seven Key Take Aways From a Comprehensive Archive of Known Russian and Iranian Troll Operations," Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab, 2018, <https://medium.com/dfrlab/trolltracker-twitter-troll-farm-archives-8d5dd61c486b>.

⁸² Michael Barthel, "Many Americans Believe Fake News Is Sowing Confusion," Pew Research Center, December 2016, <https://www.journalism.org/2016/12/15/many-americans-believe-fake-news-is-sowing-confusion>.

⁸³ Jonathan, Albright, Janna Anderson, and Lee Rainie, "The Future of Free Speech, Trolls, Anonymity and Fake News Online," Pew Research Center, March 2017, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2017/03/29/the-future-of-free-speech-trolls-anonymity-and-fake-news-online>.

D. CONCLUSION: DEMAND FOR STRATEGIC PSYOP CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Online influence activities could become the standard playbook of our foes to undermine U.S. strategic goals. Unsophisticated and spontaneous online troll operations offer simplicity and economic advantage over other conventional capabilities. The technological advancements give an edge to the bad actors over the fight in the information domain for years to come. Threats from the changing geopolitical environment remain as the cause for the development of new capabilities to meet the new requirements, as witnessed in near-peer competition and the rise of jihadi propaganda. But the progress in technology also demands capability-based adaptation to counter the future threats.

Current Russian influence activities, a proceeding effort of the Soviet Active Measures, will remain as a relevant capability of employment by the Russians against the U.S. policy goals. It is matter of time before the Chinese *online army of millions* become more proactive and assertive to seriously undermine our democratic process. The threat of jihadi propaganda is here to stay for as long as their ideology lingers. Threats and capabilities are evolving together, not dissolving. Transformation in defense capabilities is an ongoing process that could overextend in time and space but should never cease to evolve and continuously adapt to the new environment.

In the context of *information warfare* capability development, efforts for the strategic PSYOP capability development seem suitable and feasible, as witnessed in the past demands for the strategic PSYOP capability development that came close to materialization.

III. EFFORTS OF STRATEGIC PSYOP CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

This chapter explores respective U.S. government's strategic countermeasures to the previously examined hostile state and non-state actors' influence activities. Demand for the strategic PSYOP capability development grew as threats during the final decade of the Cold War and in the early years of the war on terror became evident. The need for the capability development gained consensus and support among bureaucrats concerned with capability innovation to meet the challenges. This chapter aims to provide context in which the demand for the capability development led to the efforts of capability innovation.

It starts by analyzing attempts to develop strategic PSYOP capability during the administrations of Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr. The PSYOP Master Plan of 1985 and the revised version of 1990 are analyzed in the context of countering Soviet propaganda. Next, analysis of the Pentagon's short-lived Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) during the early years of the war on terror will provide an overview of the U.S. government's attempt to establish strategic PSYOP capability in the face of rapidly changing national security priorities. Finally, analysis on the evolution of the State Department's Global Engagement Center (GEC), and the interagency integration efforts with the Army PSYOP capabilities will underline the importance of the interagency cooperation as part of the strategic PSYOP capability development efforts.

Finally, this chapter will conclude by discussing how the demand for the strategic PSYOP capability development proceeded forward with matching efforts that ultimately failed to meet its operational requirements.

A. FINAL YEARS OF THE COLD WAR: PSYOP MASTER PLAN OF 1985 AND THE REVISED VERSION OF 1990

The Reagan Doctrine of aggressive military buildup during the last decade of the Cold War saw increased DOD expenditure and capability expansion. This renewed policy

focus also affected efforts to revitalize PSYOP capabilities.⁸⁴ Its aim to reinvigorate and build capability able to effectively counter the persistent Soviet propaganda came in a series of important presidential directives and executive orders. The National Security Decision Directives (NSDDs) 45, 77, and 130 provided foundational guidance to build effective information capabilities to support the national strategy.⁸⁵

After signing of the NSDD 77 in 1983, President Reagan directed the DOD to revise PSYOP functions and rebuild its capabilities. The NSDD 130 of 1984 specifically instructs the DOD to reinvigorate military PSYOP capabilities and fully reintegrate its functions at all levels of planning, during war and peace. Subsequent DOD Directive S-3321.1 outlined guidelines to conduct overt Psychological Operations in peacetime to support military activities at Unified and Specified command level of operations.⁸⁶

After these series of presidential and DOD directives, the 1985 PSYOP Master Plan was issued to direct “fundamental improvement of the department’s capabilities to effectively perform worldwide Psychological Operations in support of national objectives in peace and crisis and at all levels of conflict.”⁸⁷ Among hundreds of suggested remedial actions to improve overall PSYOP capabilities, two innovative and notable but controversial proposals supported the idea of development of strategic PSYOP capability: the creation of a Joint PSYOP Center (JPOC) capable of conducting operations at all levels of conflict, and the separation of PSYOP capabilities from special operations.

The plan was approved after thorough investigation of existing capability gaps and meant to serve as a framework to renew PSYOP capabilities to meet growing challenges in a world of superpower competition. It laid fundamental steps to restructure and outlined

⁸⁴ Alfred H. Paddock Jr., “U.S. Military Psychological Operations: Past, Present, and Future,” in *Psychological Operations and Political Warfare in Long-Term Strategic Planning*, ed. Janos Radvanyi, (New York, NY: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990), 23.

⁸⁵ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 34.

⁸⁶ This implied broader application of PSYOP capabilities beyond operational and tactical level operations.

⁸⁷ Department of Defense, *DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1985*.

capability renewal process to be followed over several years.⁸⁸ The demand was met with efforts to materialize the development of the capability.

In the plan, several actionable points were identified to support the idea for the development of strategic PSYOP capabilities that

- Preferably be subordinated directly to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- Act as the organizational and institutional front for PSYOP within DOD.
- Be located in the National Capital Region.
- Function as the key element for interagency coordination and cooperation.
- Have representation from Department of State, Intelligence Community, U.S. Information Agency, Voice of America, and Board for International Broadcasting.
- Be responsible for long-range strategic PSYOP plans.
- Be responsible for the planning, coordination, and direction of the DOD portion of national PSYOP activities.⁸⁹

As the efforts for the revitalization of PSYOP capability were underway over the years, developing geopolitical conditions prompted the reexamination of the initial proposals made in 1985. The Soviets needed economic and political reform to survive, and the new policy of openness and transparency took precedence over military focus. And, sensing the political shift in the Soviet Union, the Reagan administration relaxed its aggressive rhetoric toward Moscow.⁹⁰

Following the publication of the 1985 PSYOP Master Plan and amid dramatic changes in geopolitical environment that led to the historic collapse of USSR, the revised version of the plan was published in 1990. Many of the key proposals remained the same as outlined in the earlier version of 1985, to include the proposal for a permanent joint

⁸⁸ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., “No More Tactical Information Detachments: U.S. Military Psychological Operations in Transition,” 17.

⁸⁹ Department of Defense, *DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1985* and Richard B. Davenport, “The Need for an Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure,” 67.

⁹⁰ Strobe Talbott, “Reagan and Gorbachev: Shutting the Cold War Down,” Brookings, August 2004, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/reagan-and-gorbachev-shutting-the-cold-war-down>.

enterprise. But the controversial proposal for the separation of PSYOP from the Special Operations Command was omitted.⁹¹

Even though the development processes for these two subsequent master plans failed to provide fundamental material changes needed for the development of a strategic PSYOP capability, they nonetheless served to carry forward the discussion for the need of capability development in proceeding years.

B. STRATEGIC USE OF PSYOP CAPABILITY DURING GWOT TO PRESENT DAY: OFFICE OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE AND EFFORTS WITHIN THE USSOCOM

The demand for an expansive role of PSYOP capabilities into strategic planning and executions gained attention even after the collapse of the USSR and during the years after the first Gulf War. Shortly after 9/11, the Department of Defense created OSI led by elements of Psychological Operations, to plan, coordinate, and execute influence operations targeting Afghans during the invasion. It intended to shape favorable Afghan public opinion on American military actions, and counter terrorists' narratives.⁹² The OSI's main objectives and proposed functioning were reflections of proposals made in the previous government studies and academic findings.

Although the OSI was technically under the ASD SO/LIC, it directly reported to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. The creators of the office envisioned an inclusive intra and interagency focal point for all influence operations and hoped the office would become an interagency body. As many suggested during the years preceding the GWOT, the OSI was created to fill the void to support the national strategic objectives through coordinated influence activities across the intra departmental and interagency capabilities.⁹³ However, even before it could contribute any substance for the overall achievement of strategic goals, the OSI was dissolved a few months later after it suffered

⁹¹ Department of Defense, *DOD PSYOP Master Plan 1990*.

⁹² Gerry J. Gilmore, "Strategic Influence Office 'Closed Down,' Say Rumsfeld," Department of Defense, February 27, 2002, <https://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=43904>.

⁹³ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 31.

a scandalous media exposure that mischaracterized the OSI's as the U.S. war propaganda machine.⁹⁴

Various efforts were made since the dissolution of the OSI to create a functioning organization able to address the need for the strategic PSYOP capability. The Joint PSYOP Support Element (JPSE) was established in 2004 to address issues pointed out in the PSYOP Master Plans but the organization remained under the USSOCOM command and did not have the intended strategic functionality beyond the reach of the command. The JPSE was renamed as Joint Military Information Support Center (JMISC) in 2009 but was disestablished in 2011. The Military Information Support Operations Command (MISOC) was established in 2012 following the dissolution of the JMISC. Even though the newly formed organization had a vision to revitalize and expand PSYOP missions and roles by transforming its capability for global reach, it was unable to formalize strategic capability development as it was short-lived and dissolved in 2014.⁹⁵

The core concept of MISOC was to develop *MISO Global Network* in all levels of operations with the purpose of becoming an entity capable of conducting strategic level planning. It intended to take the lead as the DOD's forefront agency for *inform and influence activities* (IIA). It identified areas for capability development necessary to become a unifying organization where efforts to globalize its IIA capability was at the heart of its functional purpose.⁹⁶ However, MISOC was dissolved following the reorganization of USASOC in 2014 with PSYOP Groups split and individual units were assigned to various command structures.⁹⁷

In 2016, Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) and Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) introduced the Countering Information Warfare Act that called for the need to create the

⁹⁴ John, Arquilla, and Douglas A. Borer, eds, *Information Strategy and Warfare: A Guide to Theory and Practice* (Florence: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007), 72.

⁹⁵ Richard B. Davenport, "The Need for An Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure," 67.

⁹⁶ Department of the Army, *MISOC Strategy 2022* (Fort Bragg, NC: Department of the Army, 2012).

⁹⁷ Richard B. Davenport, "The Need for An Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure," 67.

Center for Information Analysis and Response (CIAR).⁹⁸ The bill was later signed by President Obama and was included in the fiscal year 2017 National Defense Authorization Act.⁹⁹ However, this bill was intended to immediately expose and counter foreign propaganda and disinformation, rather than to establish long term strategic information capabilities.¹⁰⁰

According to Richard B. Davenport, later efforts since the OSI fiasco were too narrow in its scope and approach, both in technicality and practicality. While the CIAR intended to focus on countering Russian and Chinese influence activities in many platforms, the State Department's initiative to counter jihadi propaganda in the form of GEC is primarily focused on online platforms. This separation of efforts based on separate threats leads to less incorporated, uncooperative, and unsynchronized operations.¹⁰¹

C. INTERAGENCY EFFORTS: THE EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER

Influence activity efforts and hostile *information warfare* countermeasures are not limited to military operational capabilities; they involve a strategic perspective, and therefore it is inherently an interagency process of coordination and synchronization. While PSYOP is inherent to military capability, similar efforts such as *public diplomacy* led by the State Department, require coordinated interagency participation to enhance the effectiveness of the whole process. In his comments to Dr. Paddock Jr.' article on *Military Psychological Operations*, Barry Zorthian, "the former director of the Joint United States Public Affairs Office of the U.S. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, stresses the

⁹⁸ Davenport, 67.

⁹⁹ Davenport, 67.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Fitsanakis, "US Government to Set Up 'Anti-Propaganda Center' After Obama Signs New Law," Intelnews.org, December 2016, <https://intelnews.org/tag/us-center-for-information-analysis-and-response>.

¹⁰¹ Richard B. Davenport, "The Need for An Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure," 67.

importance of integration of military and civilian PSYOP programs and personnel in situations of low-intensity or revolutionary conflict.”¹⁰²

In response to calls for the development of strategic communications capability during the period of intensifying war on terror, the Department of State began to adopt necessary actions to develop capabilities for planning, coordinating, and leading strategic messaging. In 2007, the State Department set the Counterterrorism Communication Center (CTCC) in the Bureau of International Information Program (IIP). Their principal objectives were to coordinate interagency messaging and create specific messaging mechanism for the Department of State and Defense.¹⁰³

The CTCC was later renamed to Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC) in 2008. Following the 2009 White House report that called for the development of various “programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals,” the State Department renewed operational focus of the GSEC to countermeasures, and renamed it to Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication (CSCC) in 2010.¹⁰⁴ However, even after years of name changes, the ultimate goal of these offices remained as “a way of persuading other people to accept one’s ideas, policies, or courses of action.”¹⁰⁵ The CSCC was finally replaced and renamed as Global Engagement Center (GEC) in 2016, without suffering any significant changes in their roles and missions.

This evolution of efforts was intended to lead a whole-of-government approach by providing leadership for coordination and execution in influence activities against jihadi propaganda, and later to counter hostile state disinformation operations. Although, the

¹⁰² Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, xvii.

¹⁰³ Matthew C. Weed, *Global Engagement Center: Background and Issues*, CRS Report No. IN10744 (Washington, DC: State Department Report, 2017), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/IN10744.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ White House, *National Framework for Strategic Communications*, (Washington, DC: White House, 2009), <https://fas.org/man/eprint/pubdip.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Halloran, “Strategic Communications,” *Parameters*, Vol. 37, no. 3 (Autumn 2007): 6.

demand for interagency capability development was recognized throughout the process, it never achieved full integration of interagency efforts.

Today, the on-going interagency coordination between the GEC and the U.S. Army PSYOP community is facilitated through in-residence active duty PSYOP liaison at the GEC. The role of the liaison is primarily focused on providing influence activity expertise, as well as perform traditional liaison responsibilities to coordinate and synchronize interagency messaging efforts.

D. CONCLUSION: EFFORTS OF STRATEGIC PSYOP CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT

Demands for the strategic PSYOP capability development took shape since the World War II, but the significant efforts to materialize them only registered during the final years of Soviet collapse. As geopolitical threats grew, demand for the capability development blossomed, but producing meaningful results in response to those demands would take multiple attempts.

It is important to note that, even as the geopolitical environment and national security priorities shifted between near-peer competitions to counterterrorism in a relatively short period of time, the need and demand for the strategic PSYOP capability development remained as part of the capability development priorities; a critical part of the last century's Revolution in Military Affairs.

But even demands and needs does not automatically translate into the materialization and realization of transformative concepts. Actions that require such transformation take a long process of bargaining among interest groups, and painstaking negotiations in the bureaucratic political environment. As a result, strategic PSYOP capability development efforts stalled and ultimately failed. This nature of the development process shows that capability development has two distinctive parts.

- Demands and needs drive innovative efforts,
- But the process of materialization is a separated endogenous system filled with competition for self-interests, ideas and beliefs.

In the proceeding chapter, previously discussed cases will be analyzed in light to determine the causes that blocked the efforts to advance the demand and need of strategic PSYOP capability development.

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IV. PERSISTENT ROADBLOCKS TO THE STRATEGIC PSYOP CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT: INTERESTS AND BELIEFS IN BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS

This chapter identifies and analyzes how interests and beliefs affected many attempts to develop a strategic PSYOP capability. Participants and stakeholders in the discourse of the capability development acted upon their own interests to maintain primacy of their roles and missions, while arguing that the psychological operations is incompatible with the U.S. liberal democratic values.

At first, academic overview of various political theories on the internal bargaining processes through differing interests are introduced. Overview includes review of organizational structures that affect bureaucratic processes, assessment of how group biases impede smooth transition of ideas for optimal policy directions, and analysis of how deeply held beliefs ultimately shape the policy execution outcomes in the context of bureaucratic politics. Next, the PSYOP Master Plan fiasco is analyzed through the lenses of organizational interest within the bureaucratic processes that failed to deliver results for the critical capability gap as identified in the presidential and defense guidance. The analysis of the OSI fiasco also offers how differing group interests and biases affect the policy execution, resulting in another failed attempt to fill the capability gap. Finally, effects analysis of the negative connotation of PSYOP provides reasons why ideas and beliefs ultimately affect the development of strategic PSYOP capability.

In conclusion, this chapter aims to identify, analyze, and determine factors that keep preventing the creation of strategic PSYOP capability. Its conclusions will serve to provide material for final observations in answering the thesis' main research question.

A. PREVALENCE OF INTERESTS, GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE, BIASES, AND EFFECTS OF BELIEFS ON POLICY FORMULATION

Achievement of security policy goals require a whole-of-government coordination, and the military power is only one of many parts in the formulation for policy execution. “A combination of political, economic, psychological, and military efforts are necessary”

to provide support for achievement of national objectives.¹⁰⁶ And the central question is how to effectively coordinate national interest efforts within “a complex and compartmentalized machine,” that involves bureaucratic processes where each participants’ interests differ from one another.¹⁰⁷

Graham T. Allison’s analysis on the Kennedy administration’s internal bargaining process for policy directions during the Cuban Missile crisis highlights the prominence of bureaucratic politics in foreign policy formulation. He argues that the policy outcome in response to the imminent Soviet threat was the product of balancing negotiations and compromise among differing government entities, especially those surrounding the Executive Branch. The dynamics of bargaining interactions among different stakeholders result in individual and organizational version of national interest that ultimately shapes the national security policy directions.¹⁰⁸

Critical to Allison’s bureaucratic paradigm, Robert J. Art instead suggests that the Presidential preferences have an important role, if not a defining role, to shape the direction of foreign policies.¹⁰⁹ Art also observes the generational mind-sets shared among the top executive decision makers were equally important that affect the decision making process. He also highlighted the importance of political pressure generated by domestic politics. According to Art, the willingness of the Presidents to accommodate certain public and political views affects the process of the policy design.

Others contend that the efficacy of policy design is a direct result of how the government is organized. Lieutenant General Kenneth R. Dahl argues that the dysfunctional interagency coordination process is the cause of discord among decision

¹⁰⁶ George V. Allen, “Introduction: Part III Strategic, Tactical, and Operational PSYOP,” in *Psychological Operations: Principles and Case Studies*, eds. Frank L. Goldstein and Benjamin F. Findley Jr. (Alabama: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996), 213–215.

¹⁰⁷ J. Garry Clifford, “Bureaucratic Politics,” *The Journal of American History*, 77, no. 1 (June 1990): 161, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2078648>.

¹⁰⁸ Graham T. Allison, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, no.3, (September 1969): 690, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1954423>.

¹⁰⁹ Robert J. Art, “Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique,” *Policy Sciences*, 4, no 4, (December 1973): 480, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4531545>.

makers for unity in policy directions. He compares existing government organizational structure to “archaic, vertical stove-pipes,” and argues it limits the ability of different government offices of the Executive Branch to coordinate in an inclusive and horizontal manner for optimal integration of efforts.¹¹⁰ He further assesses that in this current structure the flow of innovative ideas and the flexibility to rapidly adapt to the changing environment is lethargic, slow, and difficult. In addition, he observes that the Executive Branch is too busy with day-to-day operations and their focus is on addressing politically urgent issues, rather than problems that require politically fragile reform and long-term commitment. He finally suggests that the United States Congress is the government branch capable of fixing the broken interagency process through their formalizing, enforcing, and funding capabilities.¹¹¹

Self-interest of government bureaucrats is another crucial aspect of internal bargaining process for policy directions. Jongkon Lee asserts government bureaucrats are not neutral professionals nor rational actors, but highly political agents.¹¹² His observation further stipulates that “agencies possess not only neutral expertise, but also political capability to affect their stakeholders’ behaviors by brokering conflicting interests.”¹¹³ Lee’s assertions also conform to the broader proposition of bureaucratic politics theories that assumes foreign policies are not the product of “purposeful acts of unified national governments.”¹¹⁴

Others take the role of self-interests in policy formulation to another unit of analysis. They argue that participating individual in the discourse of national strategy look

¹¹⁰ Kenneth R. Dahl, *New Security for New Threats: The Case for Reforming the Interagency Process*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2007), 4, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/dahl20070731.pdf>.

¹¹¹ Dahl, 9.

¹¹² Jongkon Lee, “The Administrative Broker: Bureaucratic Politics in the Era of Prevalent Information,” *American Review of Public Administration*, Vol. 43, no. 6 (2012): 691, DOI: 10.1177/0275074012455092.

¹¹³ Lee, 691.

¹¹⁴ J. Garry Clifford, “Bureaucratic Politics,” *The Journal of American History*, 77, No. 1, (June 1990): 161, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2078648>.

for clues of national interests through their shared global images that echoes their political opportunities. In this context, individuals explore their own political interests based on the reflection of “organizational and presidential interest.”¹¹⁵ According to Halperin and Clapp, government offices compete over primacy of their roles and missions, especially when it aligns with their agency’s core activities. This competition for the agency’s relevancy produces a set of “behaviors in the pursuit of organizational interest.”¹¹⁶ Organizations tend to exaggerate their activities and information reported to senior executives to protect their positions. They also compete for missions coveted by others in order to gain and maintain their organization’s relevancy. Roles and missions of organizations tend to change in times of crisis, so the career officials anticipate any shift in policy and its effect on their organization’s future roles and missions. This tendency leads organizations to support a particular policy execution over others. Organizational autonomy, morale, and budgets are often other factors that also have effects on the calculated behavior of organizations.¹¹⁷

Further, the psychological traits of decision makers and participants in the policy design process also define the overall policy direction and execution outcome. According to Irving L. Janis, *The Groupthink Syndrome*, also defined as group biases, is the principal cause for policy execution failures. Groups that lack cohesiveness, that are insulated from expert information, suffer from lack of tradition for impartial leadership, or lack internal norms for methodological application of decision-making process, are likely to suffer the groupthink syndrome. These groups display symptoms of overestimation of their morality and capability, have closed-mindedness, and are pressured toward uniformity which leads to poor performance. Government organizations with these symptoms are more prone to make poor decisions and failed executions.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Priscilla Clapp, and Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, (Washington: DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), 9, ProQuest.

¹¹⁶ Clapp and Halperin, 9.

¹¹⁷ Clapp and Halperin, 9.

¹¹⁸ Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1982), 174–177.

Finally, Goldstein and Keohane suggests ideas and beliefs should also be factors considered for policy process analysis, because they are equally important part of the nature of human actions. Ideas and beliefs can ultimately have a decisive effect on the policy direction even when these ideas are in direct conflict with each participant's own interests.¹¹⁹ That is because the political values of ideas and beliefs in societies tend to be constant, persistent, and resistant to the external pressure for change in valuation. Therefore, changes in political values of ideas and beliefs occur slowly over time, leading to their prominence over interests in policy negotiations. Principled beliefs are types of beliefs that consist of normative ideas. Normative ideas are those that stick to individuals and guide them to act by distinguishing between what is right and wrong, or moral and immoral.¹²⁰ For example, the belief that propaganda is morally wrong, because its application methods and effects interfere with the democratic process, is one of many examples of principled beliefs in the Western societies.

B. PSYOP MASTER PLAN I AND II FIASCO: BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS OVER THE CREATION OF JOINT PSYOP ENTERPRISE AND THE SEPARATION OF PSYOP FROM THE SOF COMMUNITY

As the growing threats of Soviet influence activities prompted the efforts to revitalize PSYOP capabilities, the subsequent shifting dynamics between the U.S. and the USSR slowed the pace of the execution of many proposals outlined in the initial PSYOP Master Plan of 1985. The urgency for the development of strategic PSYOP capability dwindled as the U.S. relaxed its aggressive posture in response to the Soviet's policy shift toward socio-economic reforms under Gorbachev leadership. However, two key proposals continued to be the main points of contention and were under intense debate. The bureaucratic bargaining process involving various interest groups caused the critical delay of the execution of the proposals, ultimately resulting in failure.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Part I, Chapter 1, Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework," in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Belief, Institutions, and Political Change*, eds. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 3–13.

¹²⁰ Goldstein and Keohane, 3–13.

¹²¹ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., "No More Tactical Information Detachments: U.S. Military Psychological Operations in Transition," 37.

While the key proposal to create a permanent joint PSYOP enterprise was mainly opposed by the Army and joint staffs, the other closely related and perhaps more controversial proposal to separate the PSYOP from special operations dragged on for years due to the planned creation of a Special Operations Forces (SOF) unified component command.¹²²

The proponents for the creation of a joint enterprise argued that the psychological operations was sufficiently important in the context of national strategy, and therefore proposed the creation of JPOC capable to research, plan, develop, and coordinate employment of strategic PSYOP across all spectrum of war and peace. On the other hand, the opposition argued that, since the majority of the military PSYOP capabilities resides within the Army, the proposal would require heavy organizational structural changes that disproportionately affects the Department of the Army. And that the joint character would force an accommodated distribution of command among different military service components through command rotations, while the Army committed to providing majority of the needed forces.¹²³ The disagreement was buried under the bureaucratic bargaining process for several years, and came to an end when the decision was finally made to keep the PSYOP under the Congressionally mandated and newly created U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

The proposal for the separation of PSYOP from special operations was recommended to leverage development of strategic scope and fully apply its capabilities “in times of peace, crisis, and war at all levels.”¹²⁴ Supporters of the idea argued that leaving PSYOP capabilities under the subordination of special operations would “detract from recognizing need for overall applicability of PSYOP in times of peace, crisis, and war,” and would “contribute to the lack of broader understanding of PSYOP by other

¹²² Department of Defense, *The Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) in Time of Military Conflict*, 17–18.

¹²³ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., “No More Tactical Information Detachments: U.S. Military Psychological Operations in Transition,” 40.

¹²⁴ Alfred H. Paddock Jr., “U.S. Military Psychological Operations: Past, Present, 29.

component commands.”¹²⁵ The opponents of the idea argued that the PSYOP community would enjoy sponsorship of a unified commander by keeping them under a SOF force structure, as well as by being included in FYDP 11 (Future Years Defense Program).¹²⁶ In addition to the organizational benefits, the cultural and language expertise of PSYOP and Special Operation forces would mutually benefit from each other while remaining under the same command structure.¹²⁷ Perhaps a more convincing reason was, the opponents to the separation argued that if the PSYOP forces were excluded from the special operations command, it could complicate the Congressionally mandated plan to establish a four star component command. Without sizable active and reserve PSYOP units, it could be more difficult to justify the establishment of a much-needed unified component command.¹²⁸

The key proponent for these fundamental changes, retired GEN Richard. G. Stilwell argued both the creation of a joint enterprise and the separation of PSYOP from special operations was fitting for the given geopolitical environment. In his multiple letters to then Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral William J. Crowe Jr., General Stilwell reiterated the importance of the findings in the initial PSYOP Master Plan of 1985. He emphasized the need to execute the proposals of the plan by distinguishing PSYOP capabilities as “inherent in the conduct of military activity, at all echelons of command and in all environments – steady state, crisis, and war.”¹²⁹ At the same time, he criticized the characterization of “Psychological Operations are Special Operations.”¹³⁰ He argued, leaving PSYOP capabilities under Special Operations command would limit extensive use

¹²⁵ Department of Defense, *The Creation and Dissemination of All Forms of Information in Support of Psychological Operations (PSYOP) in Time of Military Conflict*, 18.

¹²⁶ Future Years Defense Program, Major Forces Program 11: Special Operations Forces.

¹²⁷ William J. Crowe, “Assignment of Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs Forces” (official memorandum, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1987).

¹²⁸ Richard B. Davenport, “The Need for an Innovative Joint Psychological Warfare Force Structure,” 65.

¹²⁹ R. G. Stilwell, “Psychological Operations Center.” (unofficial letter and memorandum, Arlington, VA: Unofficial, 1987).

¹³⁰ Stilwell.

of its capabilities, and would be unable to extend its potential benefits to other force functions.

Even though attempts were made to partially separate PSYOP from Special Operations in two unified commands, it never fully materialized department-wide.¹³¹ After years of debates, negotiations, and bargaining, the proposal to fully separate PSYOP from special operations was rejected in 1987 with the creation of unified SOF command under a four-star general.¹³² Meanwhile, the rationale for the creation of JPOC was replaced by conditions outlined on the memorandum sent from then, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Dr. Fred Iklé to the former Secretary of Defense Weinberger. In its memorandum, while recommending keeping PSYOP under Special Operations Command, Dr. Iklé also proposes three actions to be taken in order to satisfy strategic operational requirements outlined in the initial PSYOP Master Plan.¹³³

A few years later, a revised version of 1990 PSYOP Master Plan was devised. The later plan, while recommending alternate options for separation, repeated its initial emphasis on the need for a joint enterprise. But the competition for resource allocation within USSOCOM effectively ended the idea to create a joint PSYOP enterprise as outlined in both plans.¹³⁴

At the heart of this fiasco lay criticism for the fundamental characterization of PSYOP capabilities, degree of willingness to embrace new geopolitical reality, and the bureaucratic processes that hinder agile adaptation to new operational environments. The proposal to create an independent strategic PSYOP organization capable of synchronizing, coordinating, directing planning and execution processes will regain its plausibility after a

¹³¹ USSOUTHCOM and USCENTCOM, respectively. Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., “No More Tactical Information Detachments: U.S. Military Psychological Operations in Transition,” 39.

¹³² Paddock, Jr., 39.

¹³³ Establishment of separate PSYOP and CA Command reporting directly to USCINCSOC, establishment of a PSYOP and CA Center, separate from the JFK Special Warfare Center and School, and integral to the PSYOP and CA Command, and establishment of a PSYOP and CA Directorate on the HQ USSCOM Staff.

¹³⁴ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 23.

thorough evaluation of the proposal by presenting evidence for the undeniable necessity of the capability. But more importantly, it is critical for the advocates of the proposal to be capable of navigating a process mired in the web of complex bureaucratic politics.¹³⁵

C. OFFICE OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE FIASCO: EFFECTS OF A STAKEHOLDER'S INTERESTS OVER POLICY EXECUTION

After the end of Cold War, efforts to develop strategic PSYOP capability subsided and the momentum created by the two previous Master Plans reduced to subtle conversations in smaller circles of few interested. The policy shift from superpower competition to countering terrorist organizations promptly demanded rapid changes in roles and missions of many organizations within the DOD. The renewed security priority emphasized the functions of special operations in the global war on terror.

The use of PSYOP was once more focused on the tactical and operational benefits for the combat operations. And along with the emphasis on special operations, the notion of *Psychological Operations are Special Operations*, was recreated and widely accepted. However, with the growing international dissatisfaction over the U.S. foreign policies, the DOD saw the need to create an organization capable of supporting strategic objectives of the new era of military campaigns. The OSI, mainly led by the PSYOP forces was created shortly after the 9/11 to deliver strategic messages to specific target audiences, with an aim to support Afghanistan war strategic objectives in the long run.¹³⁶

But, within few months of its establishment, the OSI was dismantled facing allegations that later were proven to be grossly misleading, and in some instances outright false.¹³⁷ Initial media reports accused the OSI of planning to conduct disinformation operations through feeding false information to foreign journalists and targeting foreign audiences. Further allegations accused the OSI of the possibility of recycling those

¹³⁵ One of the many recommended strategic organization was coined as Strategic PSYOP Unit or SPU by Dave Acevedo, *Strategic PSYOP: Coordinating Worldwide Psychological Operations – Is There a National Requirement for a Strategic Psychological Operations Organizations?*, 3.

¹³⁶ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 31.

¹³⁷ Carnes Lord, “On the Nature of Strategic Communications,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 46, 3rd quarter (2007): 87, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a519479.pdf>.

manipulated foreign reports for the U.S. domestic consumption.¹³⁸ The intensity of the media hysteria and the public outcry over the false allegations was evidenced by the attention it attracted in such short period of time, which put pressure on the Pentagon and led to the decision to close down the nascent organization within few months of its establishment.¹³⁹

Opponents to the OSI argued that the employment of PSYOP capabilities as the strategic capability would undermine the credibility of the U.S., expose journalists to unnecessary risks, and taint the liberal democratic values that the U.S. upholds and seeks to defend.¹⁴⁰ Some even argued that the employment of PSYOP or similar activities were outright inappropriate for any use in DOD and in other government agencies, because it either contradicted the U.S. national identity or had potential for a perception management disaster.¹⁴¹ Others suggested instead, to maximize the use of public affairs over other IO capabilities or PSYOP when dealing with strategic communications.¹⁴²

The OSI fiasco originated through the controversial media leakage from the Defense Public Affairs (DPA) community at the Pentagon.¹⁴³ They worried the pervasive OSI's influence activities targeting the general public would damage their credibility, and at the same time diminish their roles and mission as the main information outlet for the

¹³⁸ Susan L. Gough, *The Evolution of Strategic Influence*, 31.

¹³⁹ Many mainstream media outlets to include The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Associate Press, and BBC all alleged the DOD was engaging in disinformation or black PSYOP. The OSI was established in October 2001 and closed down in February 2002.

¹⁴⁰ "The Office of Strategic Influence Is Gone, But Are Its Programs in Place?" *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, November 27, 2002, <https://fair.org/press-release/the-office-of-strategic-influence-is-gone-but-are-its-programs-in-place>.

¹⁴¹ A. Garfield, "The Offence of Strategic Influence: Making the Case for Perception Management Operations," *Journal of Information Warfare*, 1, no. 3 (2002): 30–31, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26504101>.

¹⁴² J. D. Scanlon, "In Defense of Military Public Affairs Doctrine," *Military Review*, 87, no. 3 (June 2007): 96, <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-163680162/in-defense-of-military-public-affairs-doctrine>.

¹⁴³ Jeryl C. Ludowese, *Strategic Communication: Who Should Lead the Long War of Ideas?* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2006), <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=470271>.

Pentagon.¹⁴⁴ Accusers characterized planned OSI activities to persuade and “influence public opinion abroad in support of the national interest as Orwellian and undemocratic.”¹⁴⁵ Sensing the severity of the damage inflicted to the new organization, the DOD chose to close it down instead of publicly arguing the office’s existential benefit to the national interest, and failed to conduct a thorough investigation to correct possible security violations on media leaks.¹⁴⁶

Investigations following the post-OSI fiasco found the accusations against the office unsubstantiated.¹⁴⁷ After the findings, some labeled those false allegations as motivated by “petty jealousies,” “bureaucratic rivalries,” and even called it “political subversion” by the DPA.¹⁴⁸ Dr. Carnes Lord declared that the fiasco is viewed as one of the most serious impediment to the DOD’s effective plan for developing coordinated strategic communications capabilities and functions during the war in Afghanistan.¹⁴⁹ As result of the intra-agency competition, the tensions between the Public Affairs and the Psychological Operations have continued to exist since then.¹⁵⁰

The OSI fiasco underlines the impact of organizational interest on policy execution. The effort to develop strategic PSYOP capability was once more diluted by the combined complex web of bureaucratic politics and organizational interest. Interest of few, whether in support of national interest, played a significant role to setback decades of efforts to develop strategic PSYOP capability. But, beneath the two consecutive fiascos lies a

¹⁴⁴ George Dimitriu, *Winning the Story War: Strategic Communication and the Conflict in Afghanistan*, (Breda, Netherlands: Netherlands Defense Academy, 2012), http://works.bepress.com/george_dimitriu/3.

¹⁴⁵ J. D. Scanlon, “In Defense of Military Public Affairs Doctrine,” 92.

¹⁴⁶ Brad M. Ward, *Strategic Influence Operations - The Information Connection*, (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: U.S. Army War College, 2003), <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/ward.pdf>.

¹⁴⁷ Matteo G. Martemucci, Master Thesis, “Regaining the High Ground: The Challenge of Perception Management in National Strategy and Military Operations,” (master’s thesis, Joint Forces Staff College, 2007), 58, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a468873.pdf>.

¹⁴⁸ Ward, 13, Siegel, 131, and Brodeur, 25, respectively.

¹⁴⁹ Carnes Lord, “On the Nature of Strategic Communications,” 87.

¹⁵⁰ Lord, 87002E

fundamental cause that makes the development of strategic PSYOP capability even more challenging.

D. PSYOP: THE NEGATIVE CONNOTATION OF THE BRAND

The closure of the USIA in 1999 was in part motivated by the U.S. government's effort to dissociate itself from its activities being branded as propagandistic.¹⁵¹ According to Scot Macdonald, the American public generally associates psychological operations to propaganda, and they view them as “dirty, underhanded, and unfair.”¹⁵² Some scholars argue that the psychological operations' close association to the German originated technical term of *psychological warfare* or *Weltanschauungskrieg*—worldview warfare—during World War II gave the brand a bad name and persisting negative perception.¹⁵³ This negative association of the brand is so pervasive, that according to the retired COL Curtis Boyd, even recognizing existing strategic capability of PSYOP is challenging because as he puts it, “no senior government official will ever admit that they conduct propaganda.”¹⁵⁴

For many, PSYOP is an “un-American weapon”¹⁵⁵ and is closely associated with fascism and communism.¹⁵⁶ The former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates recognized

¹⁵¹ Albright can be credited with the final dismantling of the United States Information Agency, an integral component of the U.S. government's Cold-War propaganda apparatus. Madeleine Albright, “The Importance of Public Diplomacy to American Foreign Policy,” *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, 10, no. 8 (October 1999), 8–9; https://heinonline-org.libproxy.nps.edu/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/dsptch20&id=168&men_tab=srchresults.

¹⁵² Scot Macdonald, *Propaganda and Information Warfare in The Twenty-First Century: Altered Images and Deception Operations*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 53.

¹⁵³ Tyler Wall, “U.S. Psychological Warfare and Civilian Targeting,” *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 22, (August 2010), 288, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2010.502070>.

¹⁵⁴ Curtis Boyd, “The Future of MISO,” *Special Warfare Magazine*, January-February (2011), 25, <https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2401/SW2401TheFutureOfMISO.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Scot Macdonald, *Propaganda and Information Warfare in The Twenty-First Century: Altered Images and Deception Operations*, 52.

¹⁵⁶ Glenn Curtis, *An Overview of Psychological Operations (PSYOP)*, 19951222023 (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1989), <https://apps.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA302389>.

this uncomfortable reality. In his memorandum of 2010 in support of rebranding of PSYOP to MISO, he noted that, “although PSYOP activities rely on truthful information, credibly conveyed, the term PSYOP tends to connote propaganda, brainwashing, manipulation, and deceit.”¹⁵⁷

However, critics point out to the paradox of the public and politicians’ apparent tolerance toward the use of more destructive actions and weapons in comparison to seemingly benign use of information as a weapon of choice.¹⁵⁸ The weaponization of information, or the use of PSYOP capabilities during the peacetime or low intensity conflicts are perceived to be even more prohibiting. The American public worries about the indiscriminate damaging effect of PSYOP to broader audience, in many cases far greater than any kinetic actions.¹⁵⁹

In contrast, the employment of PSYOP in tactical and operational level of operations, especially during armed conflicts, are more accepted because their damaging effects are seen to be kept on a limited unit and/or confined in a specific space. Consequently, it is widely accepted that the nature of war gives some latitude in the application of actions or use of weapons that gives an edge over the enemy. Strategic application of PSYOP is intended to reach a broader target audience in all spectrum of warfare, and in peacetime. It seeks to be incorporated into the discourse of national strategy, to provide expertise on influence and persuasion, and be able to execute programs and activities through its own assets. Its effect is far-reaching, immeasurable, and therefore, threatening to the general public.

Democratic ideas and beliefs of personal freedom are the moral and ethical foundation of American society and they serve to guide policy directions. They play an

¹⁵⁷ Chaveso, Cook and David Cowan, “What’s in a Name? Psychological Operations Versus Military Information Support Operations and an Analysis of Organizational Change,” *Military Review Online Exclusive*. (March 2018), 2, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Army-Press-Online-Journal/documents/Cook-Cowan-PSYOP-v2.pdf>.

¹⁵⁸ A. Garfield, “The Offence of Strategic Influence: Making the Case for Perception Management Operations,” 30–31.

¹⁵⁹ Curtis, 23, and Garfield, 30–31.

important role during capability development processes and within bureaucratic politics that ultimately affect political interests of all participants. In this context, the close association of psychological operations to the negative connotation of propaganda and government control greatly affects efforts to develop strategic PSYOP capability.

E. CONCLUSION

Participants and stakeholders involved in policy execution formulations have differing personal, and organizational interests. They are involved in a bargaining process where rational political agents support, argue, and disagree with the path of each policy formulation. These political agents meticulously calculate their gains and losses on every step of the process, by delaying, blocking, or disregarding rational choices that support national interest. Group dynamics created by narrowly focusing on shared interests and ideas may lead to form biases that ultimately makes a coordinated interagency process even more difficult. Ideas and beliefs of individuals and groups also play an important role in the process of the policy formulation. The whole bureaucratic process purportedly aims at reaching a policy that markedly supports the national interest. But what may seem rational choices suffer disagreements and delays once in the process of bureaucratic politics.

PSYOP Master Plan I and II fiascos of the late Cold War era, as well as the short lived Office of Strategic Influence during early years of GWOT portray how interests, beliefs, and biases of individuals and groups affected the outcome of policy formulation and execution. Many failed attempts to develop a strategic PSYOP capability on every turn of the geopolitical dynamics since the late 1980s are the result of persistent roadblocks that are composed of differing interests, shared beliefs, and biases of various stakeholders participating in the process of bureaucratic politics.

If we were to accept the need for the development of strategic PSYOP capability in the midst of the current challenges, then the pertinent question is no longer to the whys of failed attempts for the development of strategic PSYOP capability, but to the prominent steps of *what and how* for the development of the new capability. *What* is necessary to support the materialization of the long overdue capability development and utilization?

How are we going to create a mechanism to support the development of strategic PSYOP capability without interfering with our values of principled beliefs?

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V. FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Overcoming almost four decades of obstacles put forth for the development of a strategic PSYOP capability probably will require, not only the conditions that favor for such capability development, but also a bargaining expertise that can navigate the web of bureaucratic processes. More importantly, efforts to overcome the negative perception of the brand will require no small amount of time and may not be able to attenuate its negative effects completely in any meaningful timeline.

For these reasons, I offer to provide few final observations rather than draw any plan of action or make confident suggestions. My thoughts are the reflections of what I was able to capture so far. I will leave efforts to devise any feasible plan for actions to the bureaucrats in the process of policy execution.

A. AFTERMATH OF THE FIASCOS: FAILED AFGHANISTAN WAR NARRATIVE EFFORTS

High government offices are reluctant to act on the idea of developing strategic PSYOP capability due to opposing arguments pointing to the redundancy of capability utilization, confusion in roles and missions, but most importantly because of the negative perception and association of PSYOP to propaganda. Former Admiral Michael Mullen believed the military spoke more through its actions than words. And he wanted the “traditional public affairs to provide information and context for military actions.”¹⁶⁰ Many in the Pentagon believed the creation of offices and staffs dedicated to the strategic communications only duplicated efforts led by the traditional public affairs. This reasoning, amid failed efforts, scandals, and persistent bureaucracies to develop strategic PSYOP capability, led to the official change of the term strategic communications to

¹⁶⁰ “Pentagon Drops ‘Strategic Communication,’ USA Today, December 2012, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2012/12/03/pentagon-trims-strategic-communication/1743485/>.

communication synchronization.¹⁶¹ Since then, PSYOP occupies minimal presence in the conversation for the formulation of national strategic narratives.

As witnessed during the still on-going war in Afghanistan, providing information and context of military actions alone may not be enough to decisively dominate the information domain and support our war efforts. Almost two decades after the war in Afghanistan, the majority of Afghans know very little about 9/11 and why Americans are in their country.¹⁶² In the absence of convincing American war narrative, Afghans started to believe that America is there to conquer them, like the Soviets did in 1979.¹⁶³ And in the absence of the information capability that is capable of delivering convincing and persuasive narratives through fitting platforms, our enemies fill the vacuum with their own version of war narratives.¹⁶⁴

Actions speak louder than words, for sure, and in some instances fewer words may be enough to explain reasoning for our foreign policy to the world. But that mechanism alone leaves too many unfilled information gaps that others may be tempted to take advantage for their own interests. In addition, our anticipated targeted audiences often have their own worldviews, ideas and beliefs based on their long tradition and culture. Messages simply narrating why America approaches its foreign policies in certain ways, do not necessarily resonate with their own ideas and beliefs. Stories need to resonate with their own grievances and offer alternatives that ideally involves American intervention. While

¹⁶¹ George Washington University, “The Pentagon Drops Strategic Communication: Behind the Name Change,” *Smart Power* (blog), December 4, 2012, <https://blogs.gwu.edu/ipdgcsmartpower/2012/12/04/the-pentagon-drops-strategic-communication-behind-the-name-change/#:~:text=The%20Pentagon%20Drops%20Strategic%20Communication%3A%20Behind%20the%20Name,diploamacy%2C%20public%20affairs%2C%20information%20operations%20and%20global%20engagement>.

¹⁶² J.P. Lawrence, “Among Many Afghans, 9/11 Remains Unfamiliar or Poorly Understood,” *Stars and Stripes*, September 11, 2018, <https://www.stripes.com/news/among-many-afghans-9-11-remains-unfamiliar-or-poorly-understood-1.546978>.

¹⁶³ Lawrence.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas H. Johnson, and Kevin L. Steele, *The Taliban Narrative: Understanding the Group’s Messages, Actions and Clues to Their Endgame: Narrating the Exit from Afghanistan*. (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2013), 1–2

America advances its foreign policy objectives, the subject population need to embrace the urgency for our actions and make sense of why America does things in the way it does.

B. OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES: IDEAS AND BELIEF IN BUREAUCRATIC POLITICS

As witnessed in previous chapters, changes in valuation of ideas and beliefs are slow and difficult to occur. The idea that the psychological operations is propaganda, and therefore it is dirty and unfair, will be difficult to overcome which involves acceptances from many bureaucrats and society at large over time. Simply changing the name of the brand would not help, because it never changes the core functionality of the capability nor the essence of the roles and missions the PSYOP occupies in our military capability. Simple changes in use of terminology will not change the ideological effect of the brand.¹⁶⁵

Instead, recognizing the core functions of the psychological operations as essential part of the military conduct and the employment of transparent transactions during the course of planning and execution could at least help to alleviate the suspicions of many that believe PSYOP is part of the evil magic behind government control.

Underlining the unique operational capability of psychological operations could help many bureaucrats begin to appreciate the benefits of PSYOP in the face of growing challenges of adversary *information warfare* activities. Small steps of PSYOP capability utilization in assessment, identification, analysis of current environment, vulnerabilities, and future opportunities may also help to lessen the hyperbole reaction of many bureaucrats and stakeholders against the negative connotation of the brand.

C. RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS CAPABILITY

As noted by Dr. Paddock Jr., military PSYOP units engage in two broad categories of activity: research and analysis, and operations. He explains that

the first activity consists of continuous monitoring and assessing of the psychological environment in specific foreign nations to determine how their environment affects the formulation and execution of U.S. policies and

¹⁶⁵ Chaveso, Cook and David Cowan, “What’s in a Name? Psychological Operations Versus Military Information Support Operations and an Analysis of Organizational Change,” 5.

actions. This research and analysis results in the publication of unique studies and assessments. These studies and assessments provide the foundation for establishment of psychological objectives to support U.S. goals as they relate to foreign nations or groups. Research and analysis is therefore essential to the accomplishment of the second broad category of activity, namely, the planning and executing of specific psychological operations campaigns, which employ communications media and other techniques to cause selected foreign groups and individuals to behave in ways that support U.S. national and military objectives.¹⁶⁶

PSYOP can offer its research and analysis capability as it pertains to the design of strategic narratives and personalized stories. This capability, a regional expertise, is inherent to PSYOP units even after the PSYOP officer career specialty suffered organizational separation from the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) specialty. The deriving of products from the research and analysis capability is beyond comparable to the traditional intelligence reports. It seeks to identify target population's motivations, traditions, their ideas and beliefs, how they think of themselves in relations to the rest of the world, how they perceive America, and more importantly, it identifies their grievances, weaknesses, and needs. These findings could then be applied over the intended strategic narratives and be used for material design of messages, messages that hit the core motivations of the target population and return favorable reactions for building positive perception on American presence.

In addition, research and analysis capability utilization is benign and it relates less to the negative connotation of PSYOP in general. The American general public's aversion on PSYOP mainly stems from the actions taken by operations capability, which are the most visible part of the overall functions of PSYOP. The focus on the use of a research and analysis capability could be viewed as a less intimidating and more acceptable step for the strategic PSYOP capability development process.

¹⁶⁶ Alfred H. Paddock, Jr., "Military Psychological Operations." In *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, ed. Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord (Washington, DC: National Defense University and National Strategy Information Center, 1989), 54–55.

D. PERMANENT STAFF PRESENCE FOR THE JOINT STRATEGIC PSYOP ENTERPRISE

Disagreements are hard to bridge without a process that levels off stakeholders' differences. Capability development, a pragmatic necessity, is also a process that takes place through political negotiations, bargaining positions, and interest adjustments. As the proposal for the creation of a joint enterprise was met with persisting opposition in the past, similar reactions from the opposition are expected in the future discourses.

When the Army PSYOP suffered the separation of the Reserve and Active Components under two different command structures in 2006, many considered this to be the final nail in the coffin for the efforts to develop strategic PSYOP capability. Advocates and opponents exchanged arguments that turned the process into a long journey of bureaucratic politics. Bureaucrats argued for the practicality and benefits of the proposal from the organizational structural change standpoint, but the strategic PSYOP capability development was never part of the conversation. And the so called "divorce of U.S. Army Reserve and Active Component PSYOP units" worsened the prospect for any coordination for management of capability, talents, and operations.¹⁶⁷ As both components support different force structures, coordination and integration of efforts during theater operations is difficult. The situation is exacerbated with unbalanced capability gap between the two components. For this reason, capacity bridging of the two separated components should be one of the priorities before resuming any coordinated efforts to develop strategic PSYOP capability.

Dr. Paddock Jr. also suggests capability integration of these two PSYOP components may be necessary before any proposal to devise a coordinated, and well-integrated strategic PSYOP capability is possible. Permanent staffing for a strategic PSYOP capability could be done on a rotational basis between the two components, and eventually establish a PSYOP center that manages such integration of efforts, capabilities, and coordination.

¹⁶⁷ Alfred H. Paddock Jr., "The 2006 'Divorce' of U.S. Army Reserve and Active Component Psychological Operations Units: A Re-Examination," *Psywarrior* (blog), 2012, <http://www.psywarrior.com/2006DivorceOfUSArmyReserve.html>.

E. FINAL THOUGHTS

A big part of the causes for the failure to develop a strategic PSYOP capability is attributed to the historical negative perception of psychological operations as propaganda. The idea that the PSYOP is dirty is something no senior official is willing to be associated with. And as witnessed throughout the history of the development process, it is predictable that the stakeholders and participants in the process compete for their own organizational interests in order to maintain the primacy of their roles and missions. The path for the strategic PSYOP capability development is filled with many roadblocks, but the need for such demanded capability remains significant in the changing geopolitical environment.

This research project intended to dissect intricacies revolving around the barriers to the proposed application of Psychological Operations capabilities in support of strategic level operations. The efforts for revitalization of PSYOP capabilities during the 1980s were inspired by the threat perceived in the competition with the Soviets.¹⁶⁸ If the challenges from the geopolitical competition were the cause of that initial conversation, it is conceivable to suggest to revive that conversation in the current era of changing geopolitical environment of great power competition.

¹⁶⁸ Alfred H. Paddock Jr., "U.S. Military Psychological Operations: Past, Present, and Future," 42.

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