



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**THE IMPACT OF PREPERSUASION SOCIAL INFLUENCE  
TACTICS ON MILITARY DECISION MAKING**

by

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March 2011

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**THE IMPACT OF PREPERSUASION SOCIAL INFLUENCE TACTICS ON  
MILITARY DECISION MAKING**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Military decision making is influenced by a commander's perception of the physical environment. The information presented in the physical domain and how it is processed may be altered to persuade an adversary into making predetermined decisions. Prepersuasion social influence tactics may be used to structure a situation to establish a favorable climate for influence. Examples of how prepersuasion influence has impacted the military decision making process have been demonstrated in several international conflicts. One goal of prepersuasion influence is to have an adversary choose a predetermined course of action, on his own accord, that best suits the needs of the communicator. A second goal is to have an individual use prepersuasion to influence a large audience to support his decisions. Prepersuasion influence has been used effectively in the past because communicators, individuals or groups, have successfully impacted their audience's cognitive domain and shaped their perceptions. The ability to identify and resist the social influence tactics used to influence the military decision making process will benefit future commanders. What impact do prepersuasion influence tactics have on the military decision making process? This paper will answer this research question and offer recommendations on how military decision makers can resist prepersuasion influence.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND**

In 1987, Colonel John Boyd introduced his theory on the process of military decision making. His theory, applicable to commanders at both the tactical and strategic level, was introduced as a tool to help decision makers understand the stages that correlate to an individual's decision making process (Boyd, 1987). The model supporting Boyd's theory ("OODA Loop" model) segues from information receipt to thought processing and cognitive development prior to making a decision. Little research has been done on the impact of external factors, such as social influence, on the process. The science of social influence addresses the issues of how and why people change behavior and cognition as a result of social forces (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 1). There are four categories corresponding to a communicator's task of influencing his audience. They include: (a) establish a favorable climate for the influence attempt (landscaping or prepersuasion), (b) create a relationship with the audience (source credibility), (c) present the message in a convincing fashion, and (d) use emotions to persuade. This thesis explores the relationship between the "prepersuasion" aspects of social influence and the military decision making process as modeled by Boyd.

The military decision making process emphasizes the importance of human cognition. An individual's ability to shape his own perceptions based on past experiences, as well as his reaction to the physical environment, is what separates Boyd's decision making process from automated systems that do not rely on human input. Influencing perception will impact the process because decisions are made as a result of what is perceived, regardless of whether what is perceived correlates to anything of substance in the physical environment (Lewin, 1936, p. 18). Therefore, it is the psychological landscape of the decision maker that is shaped by social influence. This landscape is often altered to reinforce the preexisting beliefs of both adversarial and allied decision makers. Information technologies continue to improve the rate at which information is exchanged. The prevalence of social influence media has increased along

with the technology and, as a result, there are currently more channels through which to influence a commander than when Boyd created his model. By examining how social influence has affected past decision makers, commanders can better understand how to mitigate the impact of such influences on future decisions.

Military commanders and operational planners have used social influence tactics to successfully influence adversarial decision makers into choosing predetermined actions. The tactics have also been employed at the strategic level by American presidents prior to making decisions regarding the nation's involvement in international conflicts. Prepersuasion influence includes structuring a situation in such a way that the target is likely to be receptive to a given course of action and respond in a desired manner (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 20). The target of influence is often an individual; however, situations do exist in which an individual will convince himself of the legitimacy of his actions prior to using prepersuasion influence to deliver this message to the audience.

## **B. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the impact of prepersuasion influence on the military decision making process at the operational and strategic levels. U.S. Air Force Colonel John Boyd introduced his concept of a cyclic military decision making process in 1987. Since then, the United States has been involved in several international conflicts, to include: the Persian Gulf War (1990–91), the Somali Civil War (1992–1994), the war in Kosovo (1999) and, at the time of this writing, the United States is fighting wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. America's war in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, began in 2001 and is ongoing. Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003–2010) is now part of the overarching Operating Enduring Freedom campaign through which the United States is combating terrorism throughout the world. Understanding the military decision making process, and its ability to be impacted by social influence, is as important today as it was when Boyd introduced the concept in 1987. Military decision makers must understand how their thought processes are influenced by the tactics of prepersuasion in order for them to make the best decisions possible. Identifying and resisting social influence is paramount to objective and well-informed decision making.

This research provides insight into the cognitive development that results as decision makers process information prior to making decisions. It also examines the impact that prepersuasion influence has on shaping or altering an individual's cognitions. The focus of prepersuasion influence in this study will be on the operational military commander and the strategic commander (the American president).

## **C. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1. Primary Research Question**

Prepersuasion tactics can be used to influence either military decision makers or their audience, but how these tactics impact the decision making process is the question that this study has been designed to answer. Individual decision makers are often influenced into making decisions that: (1) support a predetermined course of action for their adversaries, and (2) that support their own preconceived ideas/expectations. The primary research question of this thesis is: How is the military decision making process impacted by prepersuasion influence?

### **2. Secondary Research Questions**

The research must answer a few preliminary questions prior to answering the primary research question. The secondary questions are:

- How does the military decision making process work?
- What is prepersuasion social influence?
- What stage of the military decision making process, as defined by John Boyd, is impacted by prepersuasion social influence?

## **D. SCOPE**

The scope of this thesis encompasses:

- A discussion of the decision making theory developed by Col. John Boyd and the military philosophers who influenced his concepts.

- A description of the science of social influence and the theoretical concept of cognitive development to include the effects of reality versus perception.
- The analysis of two case studies to answer this study's research questions and generate recommendations for resisting prepersuasion influence for military decision makers.

## **E. METHODOLOGY**

This paper answers the research questions by analyzing two case studies. The first case study examines how the Allies were able to successfully influence Adolf Hitler by using prepersuasion tactics prior to the D-Day invasion. The second examines the prepersuasion influence that impacted both Lyndon Baines Johnson's decision to escalate the Vietnam War (1965) and the American public's support of the Vietnam War following his decision made in July of that year. Each case will focus on the impact that prepersuasion influence had on the cognitive landscape and cognitive perception of both the military decision makers and their audiences. The case studies will address the applicability of prepersuasion influence on the military decision making process (defined by Boyd), and will provide recommendations for future commanders to use in resisting prepersuasion influence. Once completed, the case study analysis will offer a sound historical basis to generate the aforementioned decision making recommendations.

## **F. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

The remainder of this thesis is organized as follows. Chapter II is a literature review of the pertinent theories that will provide an overview of Colonel John Boyd's military decision making theory model and the prepersuasion social influence tactics that impact the military decision making process. This chapter will also discuss the psychological concepts that link information processing and cognitive perception development. The question of how an individual perceives reality and how his psychological landscape can be altered will also be addressed.

Chapter III will discuss methodology. It will review the case study design as a research method, as defined by Robert Yin, and will illustrate the thesis propositions. The designs for this work's case studies, as well as how this method applies to the theory identified in the literature review will be covered here.

Chapter IV will be a World War II case study. This case study will examine the Allies' use of prepersuasion social influence against Adolf Hitler prior to the D-Day invasion 6 June 1944.

Chapter V will be the second case study. Its focus will be on President Lyndon Baines Johnson and the impact prepersuasion had on his decision making process. The case will examine his decision to escalate American involvement in Vietnam in July of 1965 and his use of prepersuasion to influence the American public into supporting his decision.

Chapter VI describes the qualitative analysis of the case studies.

Chapter VII will provide a conclusion for the case study research as well as provide future commanders with recommendations on how to resist prepersuasion influence. The conclusion will also identify areas for future research and discussion in the science of social influence and its impact on the military decision making process.

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## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The literature associated with this study is separated into four areas. These four areas are (1) John Boyd's decision making model and theory, (2) social influence and prepersuasion tactics, (3) the concepts of cognitive development and perception shaping, and (4) historical examples of the impact of prepersuasion on military decision making. The literature review will set the foundation for analysis and validation of this study's proposition. It will also provide a departure point for future research.

### **B. DECISION MAKING THEORY AND DESIGN**

In order to understand how social influence impacts a commander's decision making, we must choose a theory of decision making to examine. There are many choices, but one of practical value to military the decision making process is the OODA Loop. The importance of the cognitive element associated with decision making may seem to diminish as the military's command and control capabilities continue to increase; however, it must not be disregarded when evaluating military decision making. Some conceptual models of the decision making process present an orderly and linear representation of human decision making. Others portray a continuous process in which decision makers adjust to situations as they develop in order to create alternative solutions to the problem at hand (Davis, Kulig, & Egner, 2005, p. 8). Decision making models emphasizing the cognitive element are helpful in determining how individual decision makers can be manipulated. Colonel John Boyd's Observation, Orientation, Decision, and Action model illustrates decision making in four separate stages. The OODA Loop model considers experience a paramount factor impacting situational awareness. This study will focus on two concepts: the first is Boyd's decision making model. The second will be the social influence tactics that can be used to influence the decision making process and a commander's audience.

Boyd, a career Air Force Officer, developed his decision making concept based on his observations and experiences in aerial combat during the Korean War. Originally introduced in his presentation *Organic Design for Command and Control*, it applies to decision making at the tactical, as well as, strategic levels of war (Boyd, 1987, p. 26). His decision making concept is a four-step process composed of *observation*, *orientation*, *decision*, and *action*. It is often referred to and illustrated as the “OODA loop” (see Figure 1). J.F.C. Fuller, Liddell Hart, and Sun Tzu are the most dominant intellectual figures to influence Boyd’s decision making concept. Each philosopher influenced different aspects of his ideas on command and control (Osinga, 2007, p. 31). Boyd’s model is important because it offers a communicator (influencer) an easily identifiable target to influence. The target of influence, as the term “target” applies to the decision making process, are the predecision stages of *observation* and *orientation*. These stages occur prior to any decision being made. Ultimately, the *decision* and *action* are the postdecision result of the decision making process. Decision making influence must target the predecision stages and identify a predetermined course of action for the target of influence. This predetermined course of action will determine the best method of influence to employ.

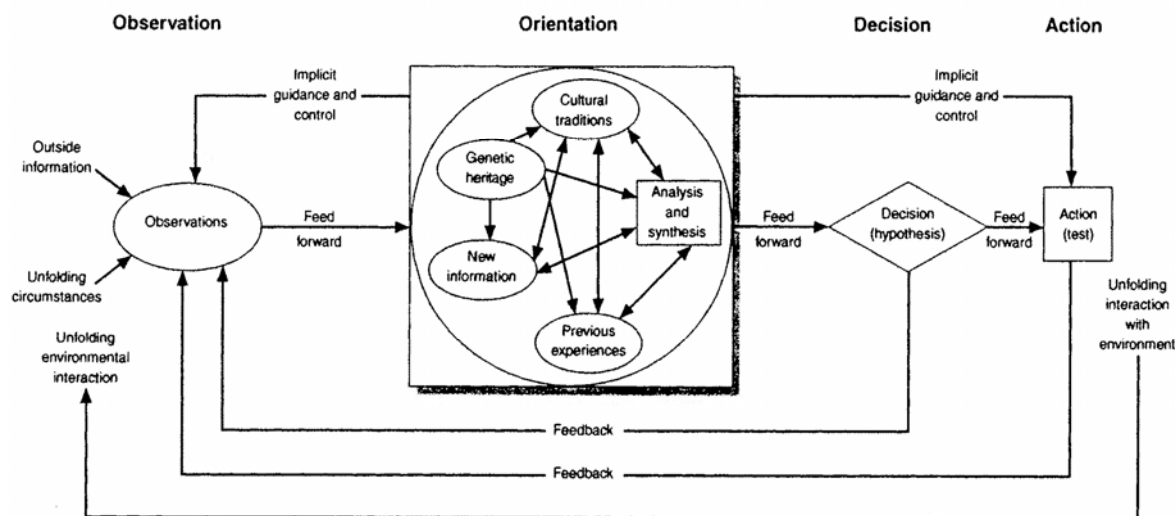


Figure 1. Colonel John Boyd’s “OODA” Loop Model  
(From Osinga, 2007)



## 1. Boyd's Influences

Frans Osinga, author of *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd*, identifies the philosophers to influence Boyd's concepts. Among Boyd's theoretical influences are J.F.C. Fuller, Basil Hart, and Sun Tzu. These philosophers shaped Boyd's ideas on human decision making and the strategic impact of interrupting the decision making process. Fuller's concept called "brain warfare" concept is aimed at destroying an adversary's decision making nerve. Destroying, or disrupting, this nerve will result in decision making paralysis. This style of warfare targets the mental and moral dimensions. Boyd's OODA loop model shares Fuller's idea of paralyzing the decision maker (Osinga, 2007, p. 32). The OODA loop model expands on the concept and notes the advantage gained when a decision maker's process continues to operate when his adversary's process has come to a halt.

Basil Liddell Hart, another of Boyd's key influences, developed the concept of an "indirect approach" style of warfare. This idea is aimed at dislocating a commander psychologically. Hart's concept includes, "the impression made on the mind of the opposing commander can nullify the whole fighting power his troops possess" (as cited in Osinga, 2007, p. 34). In his book, *Strategy*, he identifies the link between the process of military decision making and the psychological domain of the decision maker. He states, "In studying the physical aspect we must never lose sight of the psychological, and only when both are combined is the strategy truly an indirect approach, calculated to dislocate the opponent's balance" (Hart, 1954, p. 341). Hart's indirect approach applies to the *orientation* stage of Boyd's decision making model. At this stage, decision makers process new information in an attempt to balance the physical and psychological elements that ultimately influence the decisions being made. One could argue that the impressions made on the mind of the commander can be used to the communicator's advantage, not because they have caused decision making paralysis, but because they have successfully convinced an adversary to make decisions that support the

communicator. Successfully influencing an adversary to act, albeit in an unknown direction, may yield greater benefits for the communicator than if an adversary fails to make any decision at all.

A commander may choose to target an adversary's cognitive domain in an attempt to dislocate and paralyze his decision-making abilities. According to Hart, "It is through the distraction of the commander's mind that the distraction of his forces follows. The loss of his freedom of action is the sequel to the loss of his freedom of conception" (Osinga, 2007, p. 35). In his presentations dealing with command and control, Boyd briefed the importance of targeting the human element of decision making systems. He states, "(Machines don't fight wars) Humans fight wars. Terrain doesn't fight wars. Humans fight wars. You must get into the mind of humans" (Osinga, 2007, p. 44). This concept remains true today despite the modern advances in automated and artificial intelligence decision making technology. Military commanders may use Boyd's model to target and influence adversarial decision making, both group and individual, to make the predetermined decisions that will benefit their own course of action.

Sun Tzu realized the value of deceiving one's adversaries. He believed that all warfare was based on deception and noted its importance on the battlefield, "Now war is based on deception. Move when it is advantageous and create changes in the situation by dispersal and concentration of forces" (Sun Tzu, 500 B.C., in Griffith, 1971, p. 106). Military deception can be of great value to commanders because of its ability to alter the perceptions of their adversaries. Altered perceptions as a result of deception impact the *orientation* stage in Boyd's decision making model. Along with the concept of deception, Sun Tzu discusses the approach to influencing one's adversaries. He observes, "He who knows the art of the direct and the indirect approach will be victorious (Sun Tzu, 500 B.C., in Griffith, 1971, p. 106). Like the concepts discussed earlier, the "indirect" approach is synonymous to prepersuasion social influence. Its purpose is to shape the mental landscape in order to effectively deliver a message. This idea applies to the decision-making process of military commanders as well as the cognitive development of their audience.

## 2. Targeting Adversarial Decision Making Processes

In his presentation, *Organic Design for Command and Control*, Boyd identifies the *orientation* stage of his model as the center of gravity for the decision making. He states, “Orientation is the Schwerpunkt (center of gravity). It (*orientation*) shapes the way we interact with the environment—hence orientation shapes the way we observe, the way we decide, the way we act.” According to Boyd, *orientation* represents a commander’s images and impressions of the world. These images are shaped by culture, previous experience, genetic heritage, and continuing circumstances. The psychological landscape may have a tremendous impact on what a commander believes is true, even if the physical landscape presents contrasting realities (Boyd, 1987, p. 16).

In his work, *The Strategic Game of ? and ?*, Boyd states, “we must be able to diminish an adversary’s ability to communicate or interact with his environment while sustaining or improving ours” (Boyd, 1987, p. 33). He discusses the process of isolating an adversary from his mental, physical, and moral dimensions associated with the decision-making process. A commander can magnify an adversary’s internal friction or produce paralysis by isolating them morally, mentally, and physically. Mental isolation is concerned with an adversary’s psychological landscape, and occurs when “we fail to discern, perceive, or make sense of what’s going on around ourselves” (Boyd, 1987, p. 36). Mental isolation can be accomplished by presenting an enemy with ambiguous, deceptive situations, as well as by operating within his decision-making process (OODA loop). This will alter the commander’s mental images and prohibit them from making effective decisions (Osinga, 2007, p. 214).

In his presentation, *Organic Design*, Boyd references nine military philosophers to help illustrate the essential command and control ideas that support his theory. Sun Tzu and Clausewitz are two philosophers whose ideas shaped Boyd’s concept of how targeting the psychological domain will impact adversarial decision making. Boyd adapts Sun Tzu’s position on deception and applies it to his ideas on shaping enemy perceptions. An adversary’s decisions and actions may be influenced in a predetermined direction if a communicator successfully manipulates their perceptions of their

surroundings and environment. Clausewitz is another military philosopher to note the susceptibility of the psychological domain to influence. He states, “Friction, as we choose to call it, is the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult” (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 121). The idea of friction applies to military decision making because it directly influences the psychological forces that ultimately affect a commander’s decisions. Boyd notes the negative impact of friction on decision making that may be magnified by uncertainty, ambiguity, and deception (Osinga, 2007, p. 192). His theory combines Sun Tzu’s concept of increasing friction in adversarial decision making and Clausewitz’s concept of reducing friction internally as it applies to an individual’s decision making.

The psychological landscape may be influenced both directly and indirectly through social influence. How are individuals and groups influenced? The science of social influence is, “a science that addresses the issue of how and why people change the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of other people through such processes as conformity, persuasion and attitude change, compliance, and yielding to social forces” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 1).

### **C. SOCIAL INFLUENCE**

Boyd’s decision making theory emphasizes an individual’s orientation to his or her perceived environment. The study of social influence documenting its effects on individuals can be traced back to the late 19th century to Gustave Le Bon’s work *Psychologie de foules* (The Crowd); however, it was only recently that a social psychologist categorized its different methods and tactics. In an edited book, *The Science of Social Influence*, Anthony Pratkanis identifies different methods of persuasion. He identifies 107 distinct social influence tactics and compartmentalizes them into four categories: (a) establish a favorable climate for influence (prepersuasion), (b) create a relationship with the audience (source credibility), (c) present the message in a convincing fashion, and (d) use the emotions to persuade. This study will focus on the social influence tactics that pertain to prepersuasion. Twenty-six of the tactics are categorized as prepersuasion tactics and can be used to influence the *orientation* stage of decision making (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 19).

Prepersuasion is, “structuring the situation in such a way that the target is likely to be receptive to a given course of action and respond in a desired manner” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 20). To illustrate the concept, he compares two methods of influencing a target to the act of moving a marble across a table. The first method, influence proper, would be to strike the marble to propel it to the other side. The second, the prepersuasion method, would be to lift the table so that the marble will roll to the opposite even if the marble has not been touched (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 20). In the prepersuasion scenario, lifting the table would be synonymous to shaping the cognitive environment of the decision maker. According to Pratkanis, “Researchers in the field of decision analysis have found that how a decision is structured (e.g., how the problem is represented, which alternatives are included, what is the decision criterion) can ultimately impact the outcome of decision making” (Farquar & Pratkanis, 1993). How the problem is represented will impact how a decision maker reacts to and addresses the situation. This process of information analysis is part of Boyd’s *orientation* stage. Communicators may present information in a certain manner to influence an adversary. Persuasion through the dissemination of misinformation to a target of influence can be used to influence decision making in an indirect manner. Military deception shares the underlying principle of presenting certain information to persuade adversaries. Its aim is to, “deliberately induce misperception in another for tactical, operational, or strategic advantage. Deception, like other components of information operations (IO), has ‘as its ultimate target the human decision making process’ (Joint Pub 3-13, *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*)” (Gerwehr, 1999, p. 18).

### **1. Prepersuasion Support to Military Deception Operations**

Deception is one method of influencing decision making targets that correlates to prepersuasion social influence. It is not defined as a social influence tactic, however, it is often used to support prepersuasion influence. Conversely, prepersuasion influence tactics can be used to strengthen the impact of military deception operations on military decision making. The deliberate misrepresentation of reality is used to gain an advantage over an adversary by altering his beliefs (i.e., his *orientation*). As military theorists

define the aim of military deception, “the immediate aim is to condition a target’s beliefs’ the intermediate aim is to influence the target’s actions; and the ultimate aim is for the deceiver to benefit from the target’s actions” (Daniel & Herbig, 1981, p.5). A successful deception campaign will reduce ambiguity (of options) by building up the attractiveness of one wrong (predetermined) alternative. This idea is further developed, “to be successful, deception must achieve a desired impact upon the thinking of the deceptive target, either a national or military decision maker” (Daniel & Herbig, 1981, p.31). Unlike Hart’s concept of decision making paralysis, military deception should be used to influence an adversary to make decisions and act. Deception can be used to impact the orientation stage in the decision making process. Altering an enemy’s perceived environment will impact the *orientation* stage of the process and ultimately influence his decisions.

## **2. Storytelling**

Storytelling is an influence tactic that provides a causal structure to facts and evidence. “Stories determine the credibility of information, and ultimately direct evaluation and choice about story-related decisions” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). Its impact on decision making is indirect and, if effective, will influence the target’s perception of actual facts. Annette Simmons, author of *The Story Factor*, describes a story’s ability to mold perceptions and impact the subconscious mind. Most often, stories are used to influence thoughts and perceptions by presenting facts in a manner consistent with the communicator’s objectives. Simmons states, “A story can definitely undermine formal authority. It has been the tool of choice of more than one revolutionary.” Storytelling is a prepersuasion tactic that can be used to influence a target’s thought process by presenting information as more than just data. Pratkanis illustrates the concept of storytelling by describing a situation involving a jury’s decisions. He states, “when information was arranged in a story format, the mock jurors were more likely to render verdicts consistent with the preponderance of evidence compared to a mere listing of that

evidence” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). According to this principle, a good story makes the facts more memorable and believable and, thus, it can impact the decision making process.

### **3. Limiting and Controlling the Number of Choices and Options**

The tactic of limiting and controlling the number of choices and options is often referred to as the “least-of-evils” tactic. This tactic is used to influence decision making by only offering two options, of which only one of the options is desirable. Limiting the options does not eliminate the freedom to choose a course of action; rather, it provides the target of influence with the decision the influencer wants made. A target perceives making decisions of his own accord, regardless of the fact that the alternate option has been presented as a decoy and has been predetermined to be undesirable. Military decision making is often influenced by this prepersuasion tactic. John W. McDonald describes an alternate scenario wherein too many options are available: “the intentions of friendly forces may be masked by presenting the enemy such an extensive array of options and alternatives that defenses of any one would create unacceptable vulnerabilities in other areas” (Pfaltzgraff & Shultz, 1996, p. 149). This scenario illustrates the decision making paralysis that results from the availability of too many options. Unlike the prepersuasion tactics identified by Pratkanis, this idea does not describe how to shape the situation, but how to overwhelm the target’s thought process. The availability of too many options to process may lead to decision-avoidance, which in some circumstances may be the aim of prepersuasion influence. The objective is to have the decision making options seem legitimate so that the target will act based on his own accord (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 23).

### **4. Set Expectations**

The prepersuasion tactic of setting expectations is used to influence beliefs about the future. Pratkanis defines two ways this is accomplished: “First expectations serve as a reference point by which options are judged. Second, expectations guide interpretations and perceptions to create a picture of reality that is congruent with expectation”

(Pratkanis, 2007, p. 23). This tactic is used to shape the influence landscape, a concept similar to that of altering human cognition. If an individual sets expectations, they can create a reality that does not really exist. Acting upon the perceived reality may result in a “placebo effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy” (Pratkanis, 1992, p. 77). Setting expectations has been used in the past by political leaders to help them convince themselves that the course of action they have chosen will succeed. This tactic has been used by past presidents during times of war to help influence the American public that U.S. involvement in a given conflict is the best option for the nation. The second case study will expand on the concept of expectation setting. This tactic can be applied to the *orientation* stage of Boyd’s model because this stage includes all cognitive perception development prior to making a decision. The picture of reality that is created will set the stage to influence the communicator’s audience. A commander may also determine what information is important and will be discussed when they set an agenda.

## **5. Agenda Setting: Determining What Issues Will Be Discussed**

The prepersuasion influence tactic known as agenda setting, “limits the discussion to those items on the agenda, thereby limiting the available information for discussion and formally excluding some options from being considered.” Why is controlling information and limiting discussion important in social influence? Pratkanis states, “Issues placed on an agenda appear more important and serve to define the criteria used in subsequent decision” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 25). This tactic impacts both predecision stages of Boyd’s decision making model. By setting an agenda the communicator has done two things: first, he has controlled the information being presented to his audience (*observation*), and second, he has influenced his audience’s perception of the information to elevate its importance (*orientation*). Like expectation setting, this tactic may be successfully used by an individual decision maker to influence a large audience.

## **6. Metaphor**

The final prepersuasion tactic of interest to this thesis is the use of metaphor. According to Pratkanis, “Metaphors are effective influence devices because metaphors



guide information processing (selective attention to details) and suggest solutions for resolving the issue (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). This tactic impacts the orientation stage of the decision making process. This tactic can be used by a communicator to shape his audience's perceptions of a current situation by comparing it to a well-known historical event. For example, "Comparing a military crisis to Nazi Germany invites thoughts about intervention whereas a comparison to Vietnam elicits thoughts about avoidance" (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). The use of a metaphor is another prepersuasion tactic that is useful in influencing large audiences.

The tactics described in the review will be applied to the decision making process in the case studies. These case studies are designed to use empirical evidence to illustrate the impact of prepersuasion influence on military decision making. This review sets the foundation to answer two primary research questions: (1) What decisions have military commanders made as a result of social influence (prepersuasion) and (2) What decisions have commanders made in an attempt to socially influence a larger audience? These decisions will be the units of analysis for this study.

#### **D. PERCEPTION VERSUS REALITY**

Examining the theories associated with cognitive development as a result of what is perceived will help decision makers understand how cognitions are impacted during the *orientation* stage of the process. In his work, *Principles of Topological Psychology*, Kurt Lewin identifies a means of influencing an individual's perceptions. Boyd's decision making theory, specifically the orientation stage of his model, is consistent with Lewin's idea of altering perception. Lewin describes the impact of experience on psychological existence. He states:

It is, however, not always easy to determine what things exist psychologically for a given person. The most obvious method might seem to be the use of the consciousness as a criterion. This would mean that the physical and social environment would be treated as psychological environment in so far as the person is conscious of them. (Lewin, 1936, p. 18)

Lewin also describes how perception is influenced. He states, “the influence can occur by way of a perceptual process, usually leading to a change of the cognitive structure of the field with reference to the object in question” (Lewin, 1936, p. 27). The available options, or the object in question, are influenced by shaping the individual’s cognitive landscape. The idea of what is real compared to that which is perceived to be real, regardless of the true environment, may be used to exploit vulnerabilities in a target’s decision making process. What makes an individual’s perceptions a desirable target is the fact that they can be manipulated.

Lewin spoke of how people act in their environment; an environment created by their perception of reality. A communicator can influence an adversary’s cognitions by providing false information in a convincing manner. Altering what is observed in the physical environment may alter what is perceived in the cognitive environment. An individual’s cognitive perceptions should be the target of social influence because no two people share the same perception of their environment. Sargent and Williamson, authors of *Social Psychology*, expand on Lewin’s idea of the perceived environment, “a given situation, particularly a social one, never is psychologically identical for different persons. Each individual perceives and interprets a situation via his sensory capacities, attention, past experience, motives, attitudes, expectations, and the like—i.e., in terms of his unique pattern of experience and personality” (Sargent & Williamson, 1958, p. 199). Its ability to be altered and influenced makes an individual’s perception vulnerable to social influence. Altering the physical environment may not be necessary to shape perception because the psychological environment will shape itself based on what is perceived to be real.

## **1. The Physical Environment**

Walter Lippmann also describes the idea of a perceived environment. Lippmann adopted his concepts from Thomas and Znaniecki’s work the *Polish Peasant* (1918) and wrote *Public Opinion* more than a decade before Lewin’s *Topological Psychology* was first published. Lippmann writes, “For it is clear enough that under certain conditions men respond as powerfully to fictions as they do to realities, and that in many cases they

help to create the very fictions in which they respond” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 10). According to Lippmann, the real environment is too large and complex for anyone to comprehend completely. An individual’s inability to process the vast amount of information found in the physical environment results in the creation of an alternate and simpler reality. We compile an understanding of reality through filtered information received from outside sources.

Lippman describes the perceived environment as easier to process than the actual environment, “for the real world environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance” (Lippmann, 1922, p. 11). Prepersuasion is aimed at shaping the individual’s perceived environment. As a result of this influence, the target will create an alternate reality of what is “real” and make decisions based on what is perceived. The factors shaping how an individual perceives the world depend upon the environment in which someone is immersed. Kretch, Crutchfield and Ballachey note, “The response of the individual to persons and things are shaped by the way they look to him—his cognitive world. And the image, or ‘map,’ of the world of every person is an individual one. No two persons live in the same cognitive world” (Kretch, Crutchfield, & Ballachey, 1962, p. 18). The cognitive landscape, shaped by one’s orientation to the perceived environment, may also be influenced in one direction or another depending on the situation.

## **2. The Power of the Situation**

The science of social influence attempts to answer the question of why individuals are influenced to act in a certain manner in different situations. Pratkanis addresses this question and offers an idea of why people are influenced into acting in a certain way based on the situation in the article, “Why Would Anyone Do or Believe Such a Thing?” He compares situational influence to a popular ride at Disneyland. Often, by the end of The Pirates of the Caribbean ride, the participants have begun acting like the pirates depicted in the attraction and sing along and dance to the ride’s soundtrack. People act in this manner because they get caught up in “the power of the situation.” Pratkanis writes, “we see the crazy behavior but may miss the trappings of the ride—the social influence

that is taking place in that situation” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 236). This idea can also be used to explain why certain people make certain decisions. Social influence tactics can be used to induce beliefs and behaviors on an individual or group that a communicator wishes to target. Prepersuasion influence can be used to create situations in which an individual or group is influenced into believing whatever the communicator wants them to believe. He develops the idea further: “Such situations can be very powerful in inducing belief and behavior, especially when those tactics have been tailored in such a way to take advantage of our personal goals, desires, and characteristics” (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 237). If an amusement park ride is effective at creating “the power of the situation” one can draw a parallel on a greater scale if the situation deals with international conflict. Lewin notes the power that the situation has on the decision making process and describes two distinct situations that may influence a decision maker.

Individuals are influenced by life situations and momentary situations. The life situation, the more constant of the two, has a strong influence on how someone will react to a momentary situation. Conversely, over time a series of momentary situations and how an individual reacts to them will influence his overall life situation. Exploiting the situation can be done one of two ways, “the specific problem with which we have to deal in a given case determines whether it is the life situation or the momentary situation which comes more strongly into the foreground” (Lewin, 1936, p. 24). For example, an international conflict between two warring nation states can be composed of several events. These events can be classified as what Lewin refers to as “momentary situations.” The decision maker may react to each of the situations differently, however, Lewin’s underlying concept is that each response to the momentary situation has already been influenced by past experiences. Influencing an individual or group should be done to have an impact both the momentary and life situations. Prepersuasion influence shapes the momentary situation and should be used by communicators to influence the present.

### 3. Cognitive Dissonance

The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance explores the level of conflict that impacts a decision maker's thought process while evaluating different options. According to Leon Festinger, the psychologist who developed this theory, cognitions are knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about one's self, or about one's behavior. Dissonance is any inconsistency between two separate beliefs. Festinger offers two hypotheses on dissonance:

1. The existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance.
2. When dissonance is present, in addition to trying to reduce it, the person will actively avoid situations and information which would likely increase the dissonance. (Festinger, 1957, p. 3)

He gives the following example to help illustrate the concept: a smoker may enjoy the taste of cigarettes, but they may also know that smoking is known to cause lung cancer. He refers to the aversive mental state which results from conflicting ideas as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957, p. 2). His second thesis can be applied to the *observation* stage of the military decision making process. There are those who choose to reinforce their beliefs with selective information rather than form their perceptions based on what is real. Case study one will discuss the impact of this information-gathering process.

Cognitive dissonance has been referred to as a postdecisional phenomenon, only experienced after a decision has been made. In the book *Persuasion: Theory and Research*, O'Keefe describes the dissonance sequence as: (a) conflict, (b) decision, (c) dissonance, and (d) dissonance reduction. The first stage, conflict, is where an individual is most vulnerable to persuasion. O'Keefe notes, "Ordinarily, persuasive efforts are aimed at regulating (either increasing or decreasing) the amount of conflict experienced by decision makers" (O'Keefe, 2002, p. 80). The conflict experienced by a decision maker will lead them to take preventative measures to reduce it. Although it has been

referred to as a postdecision phenomenon, cognitive dissonance often affects the manner in which an individual gathers information prior to making a decision.

Selective exposure to information is an alternate theory that identifies cognitive dissonance and applies it to the decision making process prior to the actual decision. The hypothesis states, “persons will prefer to be exposed to information that is supportive of (consonant with) their current beliefs rather than non-supportive information” (O’Keefe, 2002, p. 84). Unlike the postdecision label associated with cognitive dissonance, the selective exposure theory may be used to exploit an individual’s thought process prior to the decision stage of the process. The idea that a decision maker would reject new information simply because it contradicts prior beliefs increases his vulnerability to prepersuasion influence. Selective exposure to information is a self-defeating information-gathering process and increases one’s likelihood of being influenced. The final component of the literature review is that of the two wars that will be examined in the case studies.

## **E. CASE STUDY LITERATURE**

### **1. World War II**

Literature detailing the events of World War II is abundant. Narrowing the search to the information applicable to the Normandy invasion was required to frame the case study analysis properly. The Allied use of prepersuasion influence prior to D-Day (6 June 1944) is a unique example of how social influence tactics can be used to impact military decision making. Three books in particular provided the valuable information needed for the World War II case study introduction. *D-Day: the Climactic Battle of World War II* by Steven Ambrose, *The Battle for Normandy* by Eversley Belfield, and *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* by Max Hastings provide an overview of the Allied invasion. These books describe the importance of D-Day and its impact on the outcome of World War II. They help illustrate the significance of the Allied prepersuasion tactics used to influence Hitler.

While there are several books that discuss the Allies' deception campaign prior to D-Day, four stand out as contributing significantly to the World War II case study. *Hoodwinking Hitler* by William Breuer, *Operation Fortitude: The Great Deception Operation That Fooled Hitler and Saved the Normandy Landings* by Larry Collins, *Basic Deception and the Normandy Invasion* by Harold Deutsch, and *Bodyguard of Lies* by Anthony Brown provide well detailed accounts of the deception operations (Bodyguard, Fortitude, and Quicksilver). They also highlight Hitler's reactions to the Allies' prepersuasion influence tactics. The work with the greatest level of detail of the deception operations is Breuer's *Hoodwinking Hitler*. It set the framework for the case study and was useful in identifying the prepersuasion tactics used to influence Hitler.

*The Mind of Adolf Hitler; the Secret Wartime Report by Walter C. Langer* and *Hitler: the man and the Military Leader* by Percy Schramm were valuable tools that provided an in depth look into Hitler's military decision making process. But more than just detailing the process, these books describe Hitler's control of all military decisions. Langer discusses how Hitler would seek information to confirm his beliefs. His examination of this method in selective information gathering provided insight into which stage of his decision making process would likely be impacted by social influence.

## **2. Vietnam War**

The Vietnam War (1965–73) provides an example of how military decision makers use prepersuasion tactics to influence a large audience. Like the aforementioned World War II literature, there is a plethora of military and political literature on the Vietnam War. Four books in particular provided the information required to frame the analysis for the Vietnam War case study. *On Strategy* by Harry Summers, *U.S. Diplomacy and Strategy in the Vietnam War* by Richard Lock-Pullan, *Analogies at War* by Yuen Khong, and *The War that Never Ends: New Perspective on the Vietnam War* by David Anderson provide an overview of the Vietnam War and U.S. strategy and decision making. These books describe the situation in Vietnam beginning with the French Indochina War (1946–54) and lead into America's Cold War containment policy and involvement in Southeast Asia.

One book in particular had great insight into the president's decision making process. Lyndon Johnson's memoirs *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-69* describe his reaction to the situation in Vietnam. It also discusses the impact that his predecessor, John F. Kennedy, had on his commitment to South Vietnam. The majority of what Johnson describes as his decision making process alludes to the *orientation* stage of Boyd's OODA Loop model. This concept is examined in greater detail in the Vietnam War case study.

Three books in particular provided a wealth of information for examining Johnson's 1965 decision. *LBJ and Vietnam: a Different Kind of War* by George Herring, *The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam* by Herbert Schandler, and *Triumph Forsaken: the Vietnam War, 1954-1965* by Mark Moyar offer insight into Lyndon Johnson's decision and external factors that influenced it. While there are several books that describe U.S. public opinion and support for the Vietnam War, two books are especially helpful in pinpointing the immediate effects of Johnson's prepersuasion influence following his announcement. *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* by John Mueller and *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam: Constraining the Colossus* by Richard Sobel were valuable references that offered an in depth look at how public opinion was impacted by Johnson's social influence.

## **F. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This literature mentioned in the review provides insight into Boyd's decision making theory, prepersuasion social influence tactics, the concept of reality versus perception, and the two wars that serve as the focal point for the case studies. Boyd's model illustrates his concept that military decision making is done in a cyclic manner. His OODA loop model is comprised of four stages. The first two stages, *observation* and *orientation*, occur prior to any decisions being made and can be referred to as "predecision" stages. The predecision stages are where individuals and groups are most vulnerable to prepersuasion. *Observation* is the first stage in Boyd's model; however, the most important stage in the decision making process is *orientation*.



The *orientation* stage influences the entire process and ultimately determines how the decision maker processes information. This stage will also determine how someone will react to his environment, regardless of whether the environment is real or perceived.

The social influence tactics of prepersuasion suggest that a group of individuals may be influenced by shaping their environment. The 26 prepersuasion tactics identified by Pratkanis may be used to structure situations in such a way that the military decision maker (target), is likely to be receptive and respond to a given course of action. Prepersuasion may also be used by an individual, for example, the President, to influence a large audience. The theory of cognitive dissonance is another theory that may be used to explore the conflict that exists during the decision making process. Cognitive dissonance has been referred to as the mental state that exists after a decision has been. The alternative, the selective information theory of dissonance, may be applied to the predecision stages of Boyd's model. With the literature review complete, the next section will discuss the methodology for this thesis.

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### III. METHOD

#### A. THE CASE STUDY METHOD

The case study method allows researchers to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events as they impact human behavior. Examples of these events include individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes (Yin, 2003, p. 2). This research method applies to this study because it can be used to answer its research questions by examining historical events. Other social science research methods include surveys, experiments, and archival analysis; however, these methods are best suited for answering the quantitative research questions of “what,” “how much,” or “how many”? The survey and archival analysis methods, “are advantageous when the research goal is to describe the incidence or prevalence of a phenomenon or when it is to be predictive about certain outcomes” (Yin, 2003, p. 5).

Case studies do not require the control of behavioral events, and may be used to answer the “explanatory” research questions of “*how*” or “*why*” decisions are made (see Figure 2). This method is useful for identifying the impact of operational links (Yin, 2003, p. 6). Historical analyses of World War II and the Vietnam War will be the foundation of this thesis. Each will identify the impact of social influence on the military decision making process as it played out in real-world, non-laboratory or controlled conditions.

| Strategy          | Form of Research Question             | Requires Control of Behavioral Events? | Focuses on Contemporary Events? |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Experiment        | how, why?                             | Yes                                    | Yes                             |
| Survey            | who, what, where, how many, how much? | No                                     | Yes                             |
| Archival analysis | who, what, where, how many, how much? | No                                     | Yes/No                          |
| History           | how, why?                             | No                                     | No                              |
| Case study        | how, why?                             | No                                     | Yes                             |

Figure 2. Relevant Situations for Different Research Strategies (From Yin, 2003, p. 5)

## B. CASE STUDY DESIGN

Robert Yin, author of *Case Study Research*, identifies the five components of case study design: (1) A study's question, (2) Its proposition, (3) Its unit of analysis, (4) The logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) The criteria for interpreting the findings. As mentioned earlier, the case study method is applicable because it is best designed to answer *how* or *why* rather than the questions of *how much*, *where*, or *how many* typically associated with analytical studies. Each case study will begin with a background to the conflict. This background section will provide a brief history of the conflict, including the belligerents, dates, and the social influence media available for the given time period. This study consists of the following case study components:

1. The study's question: How does prepersuasion social influence impact military decision making?
2. Its proposition: prepersuasion social influence tactics can be used to impact the predecision stages (*observation & orientation*) of decision making. These tactics are used by a communicator to influence a group or individual to choose a predetermined course of action. (See Figure 3)
3. Its unit of analysis: The unit of analysis for each case study will be the decisions made as a result of prepersuasion influence tactics used by the communicator to influence his audience. The communicators for the first case study are the Allied forces prior to D-Day. President Johnson has been identified as the communicator for the second case study.
4. The logic linking the data to the propositions: This study will use "pattern matching" to show that, "several pieces of information from the same case may be related to some theoretical proposition" (Yin, 2003, p. 26).
5. The criteria for interpreting the findings: Each case study will identify the decisions made as a result of prepersuasion social influence.

Commonly referred to as research questions, the components of the case study mentioned above will be used to establish the framework of each case study (Yin, 2003, p. 22).

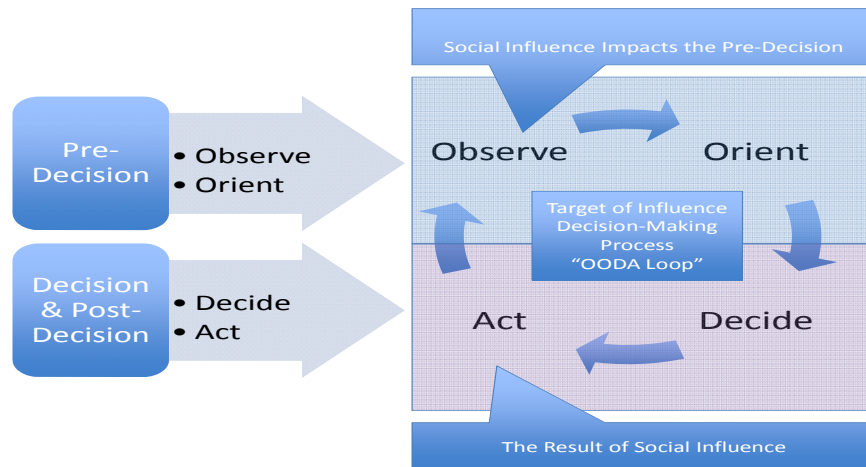


Figure 3. Prepersion Case Study Proposition Model (After Boyd, 1987)

The case study method applies to decisions, programs, the implementation process, and organizational change (Yin, 2003, p. 23). For the purposes of this study, the case will pertain to: (1) the decision making process commonly referred to as the “OODA Loop”, and (2) the prepersion influence tactic used to influence either an individual by a group or the prepersion influence tactic used to influence a group by an individual (see Figure 4). The social influence tactic identified in the case study will be the unit of analysis. Each case will identify the decision maker and the options that were available to them. It is necessary for each case study to identify more than one option in order to illustrate the role social influence plays in shaping the decision making process. Decisions often depend on how a set of options is landscaped (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 20). Prepersion influence tactics can be applied to the decision making process by altering the target’s perceptions of the available options. The case studies will offer a historical perspective of events and decisions shaped by social influence.

The logic linking data to propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings, steps four and five, are the preliminary stages of data analysis. Pattern matching logic will be used to compare empirically based and predicted patterns. Since the case studies are descriptive, the specific variables for each case (prepersion influence tactic) were defined prior to the data collection (Yin, 2003, p. 26). The criteria for interpreting the

findings will include identifying and addressing rival explanations for the findings. Alternative options and data will be included in the data collection.

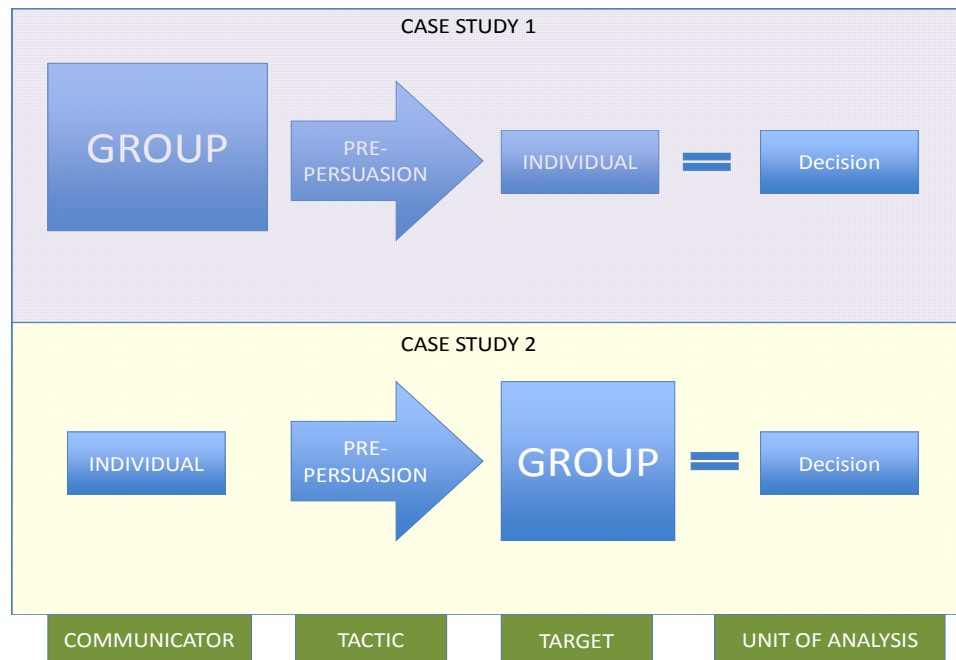


Figure 4. Case Study Model Depicting the Unit of Analysis and its Impact on the Operational Relationship Between the Communicator and Target of Influence

### C. COLLECTING EVIDENCE

The six sources of evidence for case studies are: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. This study relies on documentation as the primary source for collecting evidence. Documentation is stable, unobtrusive, exact, precise (usually quantitative), and may cover broad time spans that include many events. It is important for each case study to present concrete data. Using documentation sources mitigates the inaccuracy and selectivity that accompanies the other evidence sources. Robert Yin describes documentation as a primary source, “For case studies, the most important use of documentation is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2003, p. 87). Other sources of evidence, such as direct observation and participant observation, are not possible because this study will focus on historical events.

## **IV. WORLD WAR II CASE STUDY**

In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.

—Sir Winston Churchill, 1943

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The first case study examines the use of prepersuasion social influence during World War II. Its focus will be on the tactics used by the Allied forces leading up to their invasion of Normandy, which occurred 6 June 1944. Code named Operation Overlord, the invasion of northwest Europe had been approved by the Allied commanders at the Trident conference in May of 1943 (Hastings, 1984, p. 21). The challenge facing them was the daunting task of convincing the Germans, specifically Adolf Hitler, that the Allied invasion of mainland Europe would take place at the Pas de Calais. The Germans were convinced that an invasion was imminent; however, they needed to be influenced into believing that it would take place along the coast of the Pas de Calais (Hastings, 1984, p. 26). The Allies created a deception plan as a safeguard to protect the plans for the actual invasion. Operation Bodyguard (1943–1944) was designed as the cover plan for the Allies' planned amphibious assault.

Operation Fortitude, an element of Bodyguard, was the deception plan providing cover for the invasion (Deutsch, 1989, Exhibit 6). The operation consisted of two parts. The first, Fortitude North, was aimed at directly influencing Hitler. Its goal was to have Hitler keep his German forces stationed idle in Denmark, Finland, and Norway during the Allied invasion. The second, Fortitude South, was also aimed at Hitler and suggested the Allies would conduct a cross-channel assault from Southeast England on the Pas de Calais. Convincing Hitler that the Pas-de-Calais was the invasion site would keep the German Fifteenth Army, the force of greatest concern to Allied planners, approximately 170 miles from Normandy on D-Day (Breuer, 1993, p. 101). This case study will focus on Operation Fortitude South and the social influence tactics used by the Allies to successfully influence Hitler to defend the Pas de Calais.

## **1. The German Defensive**

German defenses located along the French coast were constructed with one goal: defeat the Allied invasion before they make it ashore. In March of 1944, Hitler described the impact of the invasion on the outcome of the war to his principal commanders, “It is the sole decisive factor in the whole conduct of the war and hence its final result” (Ambrose, 1994, p. 28). This was an accurate assessment of the situation; however, the Germans’ inability to defend the entire Atlantic Wall, coupled with the incredible loss of manpower suffered on the Eastern Front to the Russian Army, left them vulnerable to an Allied invasion. Their only chance at victory would come if the Allied invasion force chose a location where the German Army could confront them. Thwarting this assault would provide Germany with the time needed to reinforce its Eastern Front and win the war against Russia. This could only be accomplished if the Allies were denied access to France (Hastings, 1984, p. 59).

## **2. The Allied Assault**

The Allies needed to successfully invade Europe if they were to defeat the German Army. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, understood the importance of engaging the German Army as early as 1941: “for unless we can go on land and fight Hitler and beat his forces on land, we shall never win this war” (Ambrose, 1994, p. 40). The Allies faced the critical issue of “getting ashore, and winning the battle of the buildup. Once they had established a secure beachhead and won room to deploy inland, the weapons being produced in massive quantity in the United States could be brought to France” (Ambrose, 1994, p. 41). By the end of the Normandy invasion, approximately 850,000 British, Canadian, and Polish troops, and approximately 1,200,000 American troops had disembarked (Belfield, 1965, p. 43). The sheer size of the invasion force presented Allied logisticians and operational planners with considerable challenges, however, they did have an advantage over their German counterparts. Allied planners had the advantage of being able to choose the time and place for the invasion. This placed the Germans at a distinct disadvantage because it forced them to react to the attack, rather than initiate it (Belfield, 1965, p. 37). The strategic success of the Allied



invasion at Normandy would also have political consequences on the war in Europe. Hitler had counted on a separate Nazi-Soviet armistice, which would result if the Allies failed to mount an assault on France to create a second front (Ambrose, 1994, p. 40). The success of the invasion would depend on whether the Allies could influence Hitler and deceive him of their true intentions.

## **B. TARGET OF INFLUENCE: ADOLF HITLER**

### **1. Hitler's Control of Decision Making**

Hitler retained control over all of Germany's military decision making. His lack of trust in his general officers resulted in his inability to increase their independence in action. He was aware of the limitations and friction created as a result of his need for authority, but he chose to retain control (Belfield, 1965, p. 29). Hitler's decision to retain this intrusive level of control over the military decision making process:

... violated the tried and proven principle that subordinate commanders must be allowed a certain limited freedom because they are in a better position to evaluate the prevailing circumstances in their sector of the front and might be able, through swift action, to deal with a sudden crisis. (Schramm, 1971, p. 137)

German objectivity and flexibility in its decision making processes suffered as a result. Hitler was the sole individual who determined which course of action would be taken, "consequently, the weighing of the contradictory arguments as well as the final decisions all took place in his mind alone" (Schramm, 1971, p. 153).

### **2. Hitler's Decision Making Process**

Colonel John Boyd's decision making model represents the traditional progression of information gathering and thought processing connected to military decision making. Typically, the commander will gather as much information as possible prior to making a decision (Boyd, 1987). Hitler's decision making process operated in the reverse order. He did not, "think things out in a logical and consistent fashion, gathering all available information pertinent to the problem, mapping out alternative courses of action, and then weighing the evidence pro and con for each of them before

reaching his decision” (Langer, 1972, p. 82). He did not surround himself with a supporting committee of objective planners who would question his beliefs if they believed Hitler was mistaken, but rather with planners capable of finding supporting information and to further develop his ideas. Once a decision or course of action had been determined by Hitler, he began to look for information and facts that would support his beliefs (Langer, 1971, p. 82). Selective information gathering was Hitler’s method of coping with cognitive dissonance. If Hitler believed something to be true, he would continue to select information that supported his belief and disregard any information that refuted his initial claim. This approach to postdecision information gathering presented the Allies with a critical vulnerability in the German decision making process to exploit. Hitler’s thought process, coupled with his control over all military decision making, were important character traits that helped shape the deception operation.

### **C. FORTITUDE SOUTH: THE STORY OF DECEPTION**

Fortitude South was the story of the buildup of Allied forces in England and the inevitable invasion they would launch across the English Channel into the Pas de Calais, France, on D-Day. The goal of the story was to influence Hitler into believing that the Allies had in fact mobilized and prepositioned an entire U.S. Army Group in England in preparation for the invasion. William Breuer, author of *Hoodwinking Hitler*, describes the story’s intent:

Fortitude South involved an even more intricate fabrication, and its aim was to suggest to the Fuehrer that the Anglo-American invasion against northern France would be launched across the narrow Strait of Dover against the Pas de Calais. This was intended to tie down the formidable German Fifteenth Army 170 miles northeast of the true landing beaches in Normandy. (Breuer, 1993, p. 101)

The challenge facing Fortitude planners was how to paralyze German decision making at its critical juncture. How would they convince Hitler to freeze his forces at the Pas de Calais and not reinforce Normandy? Their invasion could be defeated if German forces were mobilized to reinforce the defenses at the actual landing site at Normandy (Collins,

1995, p. 3). Hitler and his generals would have to be influenced into believing that the Allies had the forces available to conduct the cross-channel invasion on the Pas de Calais.

#### **D. APPLYING PREPERSUASION TO FORTITUDE SOUTH**

Allied planners relied on prepersuasion tactics to influence Hitler into making the decision to defend the Pas de Calais of his own accord. The objective was not to coerce him into choosing to defend that site, but to offer enough evidence in the physical environment to enable him to develop that cognition on his own. This section will examine how the Allies used expectation setting and storytelling, both prepersuasion tactics, to alter Hitler's perceptions and influence his decision making.

Commanders make decisions based upon the intelligence and information they are provided with, regardless of whether it is completely accurate. Pertinent intelligence includes accurate information about an enemy's capabilities and intentions. The need to make decisions based on what is perceived is what makes storytelling such a powerful prepersuasion influence tactic. This tactic was the foundation of the cover and deception operation of Fortitude South. The plausible story was reinforced with expectation setting and had a direct impact on Hitler's decision to hold his Fifteenth Army to reinforce Pas de Calais. This decision was the blunder the Allies needed to succeed. The Allied objective for this operation was to:

Make the enemy act in such a way as to assist our operational plans. The point of leverage is the enemy's command decision. The aim of cover and deception is to force the enemy commander to make a blunder—not any blunder but a specific blunder which will aid a military operation planned by us or already in progress. (Deutsch, 1989, Exhibit 3)

There were several elements of Operation Fortitude South that increased the credibility of the overall deception. The Allies set expectations through the use of military action and by selecting General Patton to command the Pas de Calais invasion force. Prepersuasion tactics are what led to Hitler's creation of an alternate reality of D-Day.

## **1. Military Action Set Expectations**

Setting expectations with military action would guide Hitler's interpretations and perceptions and influence him to create a picture of reality that was congruent with Allied expectations. The Allies used this prepersuasion tactic to reinforce their deception operation. Storytelling was an effective prepersuasion tactic used to influence Hitler, but it was the combination of the expectation setting and storytelling tactics that gave the deception operation the credibility needed to convince Hitler of the Pas de Calais invasion. The military action used to set Allied expectations was focused on the false invasion site.

Hitler might not have been convinced of a Pas de Calais invasion if the Allies had not made any attempt to "soften" the invasion site prior to the actual assault. To illustrate this concept in the six weeks leading up to the invasion, "the Allies launched in excess of 20,000 missions and paid a frightful toll: 12,000 killed, wounded, or missing, along with 2,000 planes" (Breuer, 1993, p. 156). These missions were not designed to accomplish strategic objectives; however, the casualties suffered added to Operation Fortitude's credibility. Additionally, the British RAF Fighter Command and the U.S. Ninth Air Force increased the number of flights over the Pas de Calais prior to D-Day. Approximately three times as many reconnaissance flights were made over the Pas de Calais as were made over Normandy. Allied pilots were not briefed as to which site would be the actual invasion site, in case they were shot down. Operational planners had implied that it would be the Pas de Calais in an attempt to leak this false intelligence if their pilots had been shot down and captured. Gathering this information through interrogation would make it seem more plausible than if it had been offered freely (Breuer, 1993, p. 156).

Another example of the military action used to set Allied expectations was the curtain bombing conducted by the American and British Air Forces. The bombing, done along the Seine River and the Albert Canal, would hamper the German Fifteenth Army if it made any attempt to reinforce Normandy on D-Day. More importantly, this bombing pattern, "was hoped, suggest to Wehrmacht intelligence that the Allies were trying to

isolate the Pas de Calais in preparation for an assault by Lieutenant General Patton's fictitious army group" (Breuer, 1993, p. 156). The next section describes how the Allies set expectations by creating the phantom First United States Army Group (FUSAG).

## **2. Patton Sets Allied Expectations**

The Allies set their expectations for a successful cross-channel invasion when they chose Patton to command the FUSAG. Why was Patton chosen as the centerpiece of the story? Germans regarded Lieutenant General Patton as America's most gifted and audacious combat commander. It was important that the right commander be selected to lead the army group. FUSAG military installations may have been constructed from canvas and rubber, but the commanding general had to be unquestionably real in order for the story to work (Brown, 1975, p. 533). Patton, the well-known general with a strong personality, aided the German high command in pinpointing the Allies' invasion intentions (Breuer, 1993, p. 111). Patton had earned his reputation during the fighting in Sicily in 1943, and was considered by the Germans to be America's most battle-savvy general.

Fortitude South planners set expectation by selecting Patton in two ways. First, the expectation of Patton's army succeeding on D-Day served as a reference point by which the Germans judged other options. Second, the same expectation guided interpretation and perception to create a picture of reality that was congruent with the deception operation. The other invasion options available for German consideration paled in comparison to the threat of General Patton and a one million man army invading the Pas de Calais from Southeast England. The picture of reality that Fortitude South created was that of an impending invasion led by Patton himself. Hitler developed his cognitions in response to the situation. Fortitude South planners understood the German admiration for Patton and took full advantage of it when selecting him to command the phantom army group. Along with the physical decoys of Operation Quicksilver, Patton was a tangible element that Hitler was forced to consider when developing his Pas de Calais perceptions.

### **3. Using Military Deception to Tell the Story**

The Allied deception operation responsible for creating the phantom FUSAG was known as Quicksilver. A sub-element of Fortitude South, the operation relied on military deception to shape the perception of German decision makers. Quicksilver used physical deception to help tell the Fortitude story. For instance, decoy encampments, airfields, and storage depots altered the physical environment and shaped the adversary's cognitive landscape.

Operation Quicksilver was responsible for fabricating an entire Allied army group consisting of one million men. This phantom army was assembled across the Strait of Dover from the Pas de Calais in southeastern England (Breuer, 1993, p. 111). In addition to the decoy storage depots and encampments previously mentioned, other physical decoys adding to the overall deception included fake aircraft made of wood and canvas, tanks and artillery made of inflated rubber, as well as empty boxes used to simulate ammunition dumps (Breuer, 1993, p. 114). Another "dummy" deception piece was the landing craft. Breuer describes how they were constructed. He states, the craft "were simply skeletons of tubular poles welded together in the form of barges, covered by gray canvas and floated on empty oil drums."

Adding to the FUSAG deception were the regular patrols above the phantom army sites that were conducted by the British and American fighter squadrons. These patrols added to the story's credibility. The adversary, Hitler, would not perceive that the sites were real if the Allies made no attempt to protect them from his Luftwaffe. He began to shape his perceptions about the army group to match the visual cues he received from Allied deception planners. Allied pilots patrolled the skies above the FUSAG and were occasionally ordered to allow German Luftwaffe reconnaissance planes to collect photographic intelligence on these sites (Breuer, 1993, p. 115). This physical evidence illustrates the visual cues that would eventually reach Hitler and alter his perception of reality.

The prepersuasion tactic of storytelling determines the credibility of information, and ultimately directs evaluation and choice about story-related decisions (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). Operation Fortitude South may be considered one of the most effective stories told during World War II because of its impact on Hitler's decision making. Hitler made his decisions because Allied storytelling portrayed the elements of the Pas de Calais invasion in a believable manner. This prepersuasion influence tactic favored the Allies in their effort to influence Hitler due to the nature of his decision making process. The information being presented and the story being told by the Allies continued to support his belief of a cross-channel invasion of France.

## **E. PREPERSUASION RESULTS**

### **1. PreInvasion Effects of Fortitude South**

Operation Fortitude South successfully influenced Hitler into believing that the Allies would invade the Pas de Calais. An intercepted message from Japanese General Oshima to Tokyo, prior to the invasion, relayed information he had been passed by Hitler in regard to the Allies' D-Day intentions. It reads, "The enemy has assembled about 80 divisions in the British Isles." These 80 divisions, which did not exist, represent Patton's fictitious army group. More important than the fact that these troops and equipment were imaginary was the fact that Hitler believed they existed. (Collins, 1995, p. 14) More evidence of Fortitude's ability to shape Hitler's perception came from a captured map. This map "indicated U.S. forces in East Anglia and Southeastern England where they had been notionally established by Fortitude South. Hitler's disposition of forces, namely the Fifteenth German Army, demonstrates that even as late as D-Day, he was more concerned about the Pas de Calais than the Overlord beaches" (Deutsch, 1989, p. 8). Additional evidence of Hitler's concerns is illustrated on the following map which depicts the German fortresses and secondary fortifications at Pas de Calais. The actual Allied invasion site at Normandy had not been reinforced in this manner (See Figures 5 and 6).

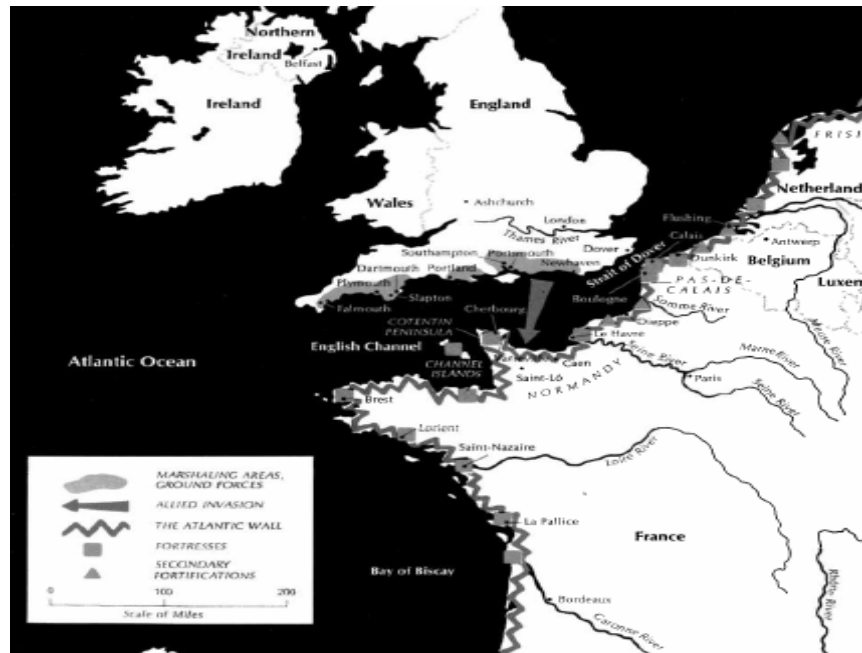


Figure 5. Map Depicting German Defenses on 1 June 1944, Five Days Prior to D-Day. The Pas-de-Calais Area, Believed to be the Invasion Site, Was the Most Fortified Area Along the Atlantic Wall (Time-Life Books, 1989)



Figure 6. German Defenses on the Pas de Calais, May 1944 (From Badsey, 1990)

## 2. Postinvasion Effects of Fortitude South

Hitler was convinced, even after the initial D-Day landings, that Normandy was merely a diversion. He believed that the Allies were trying to draw his forces away from the Pas de Calais prior to the main assault. The German command in France had been virtually paralyzed by confusion and indecision on the morning of 6 June 1944 (D-Day).



Allied deception planners had counted on the “the fog of war” to add to the deception story. Electronic Warfare operations conducted the morning of the invasion were designed to deceive German radar operators stationed along the coast of the Pas de Calais. The large enemy fleet approaching the beach, which in reality were aluminum strips thrown from planes designed to imitate a fleet’s radar cross section, would “eventually evolve into ‘confirmed facts’ and become broad arrows signifying invasion forces on situation maps at many Wehrmacht headquarters” (Breuer, 1993, p. 201). Another example of postinvasion storytelling came in the form of a narrative. The BBC broadcasted a prerecorded statement made by General Dwight Eisenhower stating the Normandy invasion had been the initial assault. In the statement, he alluded to a “sledgehammer blow” that would soon land elsewhere (Breuer, 1993, p. 215). Hitler’s decision making as a result of these “facts” ensured the Allies met with as little resistance as possible on D-Day.

### **3. Storytelling and Expectation Setting Shape the Cognitive Landscape**

Allied planners used prepersuasion social influence to shape Hitler’s cognitive landscape. Lewin states, “what is real is what has effects” (Lewin, 1936, p. 19). The deceptions used in Operation Fortitude South are a prime example of this concept. Patton’s army in southeast England did not exist, however, it had a real effect on Hitler’s cognitions and ultimately his decision making. The Allies continued to offer information to supporting what Hitler perceived to be real. His process of finding information to support his decision making is an example of the selective exposure theory (O’Keefe, 2002, p. 84). He failed to accept information that did not support his cognitions. Storytelling targeted this process and exploited it to shape his psychological landscape. Hitler was also influenced because he was caught in the power of the situation. The Allies were able to induce certain beliefs and behaviors, especially considering that the social influence tactics they chose exploited his decision making process. Prepersuasion influence was used to structure the story of an imminent Allied invasion in such a way that Hitler was most likely to be receptive of the Pas de Calais hoax. The decision making process was impacted at both predecision stages of the decision making model.

The Allies presented him with the physical information that determined what he *observed*. As a result, he oriented himself to the environment and made his decision based on what he believed to be real.

#### **4. Hitler's Self-Generated Persuasion**

Hitler's self image as a brilliant military decision maker led to his self-generated persuasion. Research has shown that self-generated persuasion is one of the most effective persuasion tactics ever identified (Pratkanis, 1992, p. 168). Whether influenced by a group or an individual, self-generated persuasion is aimed at asking a person to imagine adopting a course of action. In his book, *Age of Propaganda*, Pratkanis describes the impact of self-generated persuasion on an individual's cognitions. He writes:

It gains its power from providing subtle social clues and directions that ask the target of influence, in effect, to “think up as many positive cognitive responses about the issue as you can and, if you do happen to come up with some counterarguments, to be ready to refute them. The resulting message will come from a source that you almost always consider credible, trustworthy, respected, and liked—yourself. (Pratkanis, 1992, p. 168)

Hitler's decision making style, which emphasized complete control and exposure to selective information, made him the ideal target for self-generated persuasion. Hitler's decision to defend Pas de Calais was not a recommendation made by his subordinates, but his own. He considered this course of action superior to the alternative because it came from his most credible and trustworthy source—himself. The counterargument to his cross-channel invasion cognition came on D-Day, after his subordinates reported the Allied assault on Normandy. He did not accept this information, but refuted it because it did not support the beliefs he had developed prior to the invasion.

#### **5. Hitler Experiences Cognitive Dissonance**

Like the tactic of self-generated persuasion, cognitive dissonance had an impact on Hitler's decision making process. The presence of dissonance, the disequilibrium described by Festinger, tailored Hitler's information-gathering process to incorporate the

information that would decrease the level of dissonance he experienced. Festinger discusses the impact of dissonance on the possibility of future actions. He observes the lack of resistance in cognitive development as a result of selective information, "Thus, prior to the taking of action, many cognitive elements will have been established which may later be dissonant with the cognition corresponding to the action which does ensue" (Festinger, 1957, p. 126). The relevant information presented to Hitler was not met with resistance because it supported his predetermined beliefs. Festinger explains that dissonance may be reduced by adding new cognitive elements resulting in new consonant relationships between existing beliefs. This method of reducing cognitive dissonance would have improved Hitler's decision making process because it would force him to examine new information and form new cognitions to reflect the current situation (Festinger, 1957, p. 126).

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## **V. VIETNAM WAR CASE STUDY**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The United States' involvement in Vietnam began long before President Johnson made the decision to go to war in July of 1965. This decision, which many consider to be the most detrimental made during his term, signaled the beginning of the end for America's containment policy in Southeast Asia. The U.S. suffered more than 50,000 casualties—and lost a war against what many had dismissed as a “lesser” adversary—as a result of Johnson's decision. Ramifications of the Vietnam War lasted long after its official end in 1973, and its use as a metaphor is still an effective method of eliciting thoughts of avoiding involvement in international conflicts (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). U.S. involvement in Vietnam was harmful to the nation's morale because the adversary, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army, had chosen as their primary target not men or equipment, but the will of the American people. Their willingness to prolong the conflict in order to accomplish their objective of eliminating U.S. support for the war is why many of the historians of the Vietnam War consider Johnson's decision to be disastrous.

The Vietnam War was not lost at the tactical level. Offensive operations should have started as soon as Johnson had made his decision to escalate American involvement. Theoretically, the most effective strategy would have been to go on the offensive against North Vietnam; however, this course of action was not in line with the U.S. policy of containment. This policy limited military commanders because it called for the containment rather than the destruction of communism (Summers, 1982, p. 87). Ineffective decisions made at the strategic level are the primary reason the United States lost the war. Success at the tactical level was not enough to offset a poor national strategy. Decisions made at the strategic level, specifically Johnson's aforementioned decision, resulted in a protracted war and gave the military little hope of succeeding in Vietnam. Most Vietnam War historians agree that the strategic policy of containment is what led both to America's involvement and ultimate defeat in Vietnam. Richard Lock-Pullan is a historian who shares this view. In his book, *U.S. Diplomacy and Strategy in*

*the Vietnam War*, he describes the aim of the containment policy. He writes that it was, “aimed to restrict the influence of the Soviet Union and communism until communism collapsed under its own contradictions” (Lock-Pullan, 2008, p. 104). The “domino theory” was another factor that shaped public perceptions. The theory detailed the hypothetical scenario in which free countries fell to communism one after another. This theory combined with the ideal of communist containment in Southeast Asia led many American’s to view Vietnam as one of the most important issues at the time (Lock-Pullan, 2008, p. 104).

The United States had little interest in Vietnam’s territory, industrial potential, or democratic ideals, but could not afford to lose credibility or to be challenged successfully in any part of the world. The international audience would question the determination of the United States to resist aggression if it did not face the communist threat in Vietnam (Khong, 1992, p. 72). Some argue that the Vietnam War was a war of choice and that public perception was shaped to view the war as vital to national interests because that is how the administration characterized it. David Anderson, author of *The War That Never Ends*, comments, “The Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations chose to define the survival of South Vietnam as of vital strategic interest to the United States in the global policy of containment of Soviet and Chinese power” (Anderson, 2007, p. 14).

Understanding why the United States lost the Vietnam War sets the framework for analyzing the impact of Johnson’s decision. As president, he was responsible for making strategic decisions. Involvement in Vietnam did not begin with the Johnson administration, however, it was his administration that decided to move beyond a supporting role to South Vietnam. Both administrations prior to Johnson taking office had made decisions regarding military involvement in Vietnam. Understanding Johnson’s decision making process and how it was influenced by the decisions made by his predecessors will help explain why he chose to escalate the number of U.S. forces and, in essence, go to war in Vietnam.

## **B. PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Johnson had shaped his own cognitions about Vietnam prior to influencing the perceptions of the public. In his biography, *The Vantage Point*, he writes, "When a president makes a decision, he seeks all the information he can get. At the same time, he cannot separate himself from his own experience and memory. This is especially true when his decisions involve the lives of men and the safety of the nation (Johnson, 1971, p. 46). In this statement, he mentions the intangible factors that impacted his decision making. Experience and memory are the internal forces that impacted his cognitions and perceptions about the situation in Vietnam. Johnson is referring to the *orientation* stage of his decision making process when he mentions the impact of memory and experience on influencing his decisions. Parallels can easily be drawn between Boyd's concept of *orientation*, the stage where a commander's impressions of the world are shaped by previous experience, and Johnson's description of the factors impacting his decision making process. These intangible elements would influence the prepersuasion tactics used by the president to influence the public.

Unlike the first case study that examines the use of prepersuasion to influence an individual, this study will examine the use of prepersuasion by an individual to influence a large audience. Prepersuasion, as it applies to the president's decision making process and perceptions, was used to influence the American public into supporting the war. In essence, supporting the war was a decision to view Vietnam in the same manner as it was projected by the president. Johnson had convinced himself that the containment of communism in Southeast Asia was paramount to preserving freedom and democracy throughout the world. Once convinced, he would use prepersuasion tactics to influence his target, the American public, by structuring the situation in such a way that they would be receptive to his message.

### **1. Eisenhower's Vietnam Decision**

The French and Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh were at war from 1946 to 1954. France was fighting to reassert its colonial domination over Indochina (Vietnam). The goal of

the Vietminh was to disrupt French colonialism and drive the French out of Vietnam. France received aid from the United States throughout this war and, by 1951, U.S. aid—military, technical, and economic—to the French war effort totaled \$448 million. This was approximately 40 percent of what France had paid to fund their war effort. By 1954, the percentage of U.S. aid to France's war had increased to almost 80 percent of its total cost (Khong, 1992, p. 74). American involvement in Vietnam, although indirect, began almost two decades before Johnson made the decision to escalate the number of American combat troops. President Eisenhower (1953–1961) was concerned about a general war with the communist nations of China and the USSR. He was president in March of 1954 when France declared defeat following their defeat at Dien Bien Phu to the Vietminh. He had witnessed the outcome of France's involvement, and understood the inherent danger of entering a war in Vietnam. Eisenhower could not imagine the U.S. making the same mistake of entering a war in Southeast Asia and, therefore, decided not to enter into a war in Vietnam (Khong, 1992, p. 75).

## **2. Kennedy's Vietnam Decision**

John F. Kennedy (1961–1963) was the second president to face the decision of whether to go to war in Vietnam. Like Eisenhower, Kennedy chose not to send combat forces. Kennedy's recommended course of action was to support South Vietnam by sending military advisers and aid (Khong, 1992, p. 86). Kennedy's containment policy included counterinsurgency operations and training for the U.S. Army. By 1962, he had sent approximately 4,000 U.S. advisors to Vietnam. The success of the containment policy hinged on the nation's ability to fight a "limited war." This included the use of show of force and flexible responses. Its focus was not on a conventional ground war. Although he did not escalate the war prior to being assassinated, Kennedy understood the role containment would play in protecting U.S. interests. In his inaugural address in 1961, he stated, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty" (Lock-Pullan, 2008, p. 105).



Kennedy immediately set his expectations and made clear the actions he would be willing to take as president to contain communism and to protect the democratic ideals in South Vietnam.

### **C. ESCALATING U.S. INVOLVEMENT: LBJ'S DECISION 1965**

A President searches his mind and his heart for the answers, so that when he decides on a course of action it is in the long-range best interests of the country, its people, and its security.

—Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1971

President Johnson announced his decision to escalate U.S. involvement in the war on 28 July 1965 at a White House press conference. The President told his audience that he would dispatch an additional 50,000 troops, raising the total number of U.S. troops to 125,000. He also announced that he would send as many troops as his commanders requested in order to win (Herring, 2007, p. 1). Johnson would later state, “Now we are committed to major combat in Vietnam.” Unlike his predecessors, whose decisions did not send the U.S. into a protracted war in Vietnam, Johnson made a decision in 1965 that resulted in a war that lasted the better part of a decade. Not only did this decision increase the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam, but it also created an open-ended commitment to defending South Vietnam from communist influence and North Vietnamese aggression (Schandler, 1977, p. 31). Mark Moyar, author of *Triumph Forsaken: the Vietnam War, 1954–1965*, discusses the open-ended commitment trap that was the consequence of the 1965 decision. He believes that Johnson knew that the war would last much longer than the public had anticipated. Johnson suggests this when he states, “I think the American people ought to understand that there is no quick solution to the problem that we face there. I would not want to prophesy or predict whether it would be a matter of months or years or decades” (Moyar, 2006, p. 416). Many Vietnam War historians consider Johnson’s 1965 decision to be, “one of the most fateful of the postwar decisions in American foreign policy” (Khong, 1992, p. 48).

Did Johnson make this decision knowing it would have such negative consequences? Some argue the adequacy of Johnson's decision making; however, he believed he had made the best decision possible in 1965. Johnson was convinced that domestic opinion would not determine whether the United States would intervene in Vietnam. The nation's perceptions and fears of communist influence in Asia had been influenced by recent communist military advances. These fears would help Johnson's prepersuasion influence on the nation prior to making the decision to go to war (Moyar, 2006, p. 413). Johnson frequently made strategic decisions as president, but what makes his decision in 1965 worth examining? Several historians consider this decision to be one of the most significant decisions made during his presidency because of its long-term impact. In his book, *Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam*, author Herbert Schandler describes this impact:

No further proof of the monumental implications of the decisions made in the summer of 1965 is required beyond the fact that, by the end of 1967, the time General Westmoreland estimated it was required to defeat the enemy, the United States had 107 battalions and a total of 525,000 men in Vietnam without a victory in sight. (Schandler, 1977, p. 32)

The public may not have decided to consider Vietnam as important as Johnson claimed it to be had it not been for his effective use of prepersuasion influence tactics. The following sections will identify these tactics and describe the impact they had on the public perception of the Vietnam War.

#### **D. PREPERSUASION INFLUENCE AND PUBLIC OPINION**

Why did President Johnson feel it was necessary to use prepersuasion tactics to influence public opinion if American involvement in Vietnam really was in the nation's best interest? Johnson estimated that the war would last much longer than expected when he ordered the escalation; however, he was willing to remain committed to South Vietnam regardless of the public opinion at home. Public opinion had little weight on the escalation decision. Richard Sobel, author of *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam*, suggests this, but recognizes that leading public opinion to

support his decision was one of the president's goals. He recognizes the importance of influencing public opinion to support the decision, once it had been made. Sobel maintains:

Most decision-making during the Vietnam War believed that leaders should lead public opinion, and, most tried to lead that opinion toward support for U.S. policies. Most leaders did not generally feel that they should follow public opinion or that opposition was wise or principled. (Sobel, 2001, p. 62)

The presidential decision making did not acknowledge public opinion as one of the external factors impacting the process. In Johnson's case, public opinion, specifically the public's support for his decision, was an afterthought and could be shaped to meet his political objectives.

Johnson garnered support for his decision because he was able to influence the American public by using prepersuasion influence tactics. The majority of Americans supported his decision to go to war as a result of these tactics. His use of prepersuasion influence began the moment he was inaugurated following President Kennedy's assassination in 1963. Johnson set an agenda for more than a year before making his decision in July of 1965. He set expectations upon announcing the escalation. He used the following prepersuasion tactics to influence public perception: set expectations, agenda setting, and metaphor. Johnson successfully utilized these tactics to guide the public's interpretations and perceptions and to create a reality of American involvement in Vietnam that was congruent with his own expectation (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 23). The public's perceptions and cognitions about the importance of defending Vietnam were shaped, in the *orientation* stage, before the public was faced with the decision whether to support Johnson's decision.

### **1. Johnson Sets an Agenda: 1963–64**

The first prepersuasion tactic used by Johnson was agenda setting. This tactic was designed to limit the discussion to the items on his agenda. Placing the Vietnam War on his agenda made U.S. involvement appear more important to the public, and served to

define the criteria used in his subsequent decisions (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 25). For Johnson, setting an agenda accomplished a few things. First, it put a war in Vietnam where it had not previously been—in the minds of Americans. Second, the war gained immediate credibility as a vital national interest because it was being discussed by the President. Third, it gave him the option to go to war when the opportunity presented itself. This is what Pratkanis defines as defining the criteria used in subsequent decisions. The subsequent decision in this study is the decision to escalate American involvement in Vietnam, made in 1965.

Johnson's agenda setting placed a level of importance on the Vietnam War that may not have been completely accurate, but had the same result of influencing public perception as if it were. Was maintaining democracy in South Vietnam as vital to U.S. security as Johnson portrayed it to be? Perhaps not, but the President was determined to influence the public into believing that it was. One of his first acts of agenda setting occurred on 27 November 1963, only five days after he had been sworn into office. At a Joint Session of Congress, he pledged to both Congress and the American public: "We will keep our commitments from South Vietnam to West Berlin" (Johnson, 1971, p. 43). Influence through agenda setting was consistent with Johnson's decision making style, because placing Vietnam on his agenda was consonant with his prior cognitions. These beliefs had been influenced by his predecessor before he assumed the presidency. An example of this can be found in his memoirs. Johnson admits to placing Vietnam on the nation's agenda before making the decision to go to war. He writes (upon assuming the presidency):

I would devote every hour of every day during the remainder of John Kennedy's unfulfilled term to achieving the goals he had set. That meant seeing things through in Vietnam as well as coping with the many other international and domestic problems he had faced (Johnson, 1971, p. 42)

Johnson would have to set his agenda before he could see things through in Vietnam. The next statement was made more than a year prior to his decision of 1965 and was one of the first steps Johnson took toward shaping public perception. Johnson continued with setting his agenda in his attempt to shape the cognitive landscape of his

audience. In remarks made in August of 1964, he expanded on the level of commitment he had made a year earlier. The following statement is another example of presidential agenda setting:

Some say we should withdraw from South Vietnam, that we have lost almost 200 lives there in the last four years and we should come home. But the United States cannot and must not turn aside and allow the freedom of a brave people to be handed over to communist tyranny (Buzzanco, 2007, p. 153)

The underlying tone is similar in each of the remarks, but there is greater emphasis on U.S. commitment to South Vietnam and willingness to see things through as Johnson's decision to escalate drew near. These remarks impacted the public's cognitive development and perceptions regarding Vietnam. The public had not given much interest to a war in South Vietnam before Johnson put the idea in the minds of the American public. Setting his agenda prior to making his decision structured the situation in a manner that was conducive to the delivery of his message. The second prepersuasion tactic Johnson used was expectation setting.

## **2. McNamara Limits and Controls the Number of Options: 1965**

Johnson met with Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara a week prior to announcing the escalation decision at his White House press conference. At this meeting, McNamara provided Johnson with a list of options outlining possible U.S. courses of action for an escalated involvement in Vietnam. The first option, according to McNamara, included cutting the nation's losses and withdrawing under the best conditions possible. This option would almost certainly lead to U.S. humiliation and would be damaging for future U.S. effectiveness on the world scene. The second called for continuing at the present level and limiting forces to 75,000 while "playing for breaks." Again, this option would eventually result in U.S. withdrawal under unfavorable circumstances. The third option, recommended by McNamara, was the option that called for expanding U.S. military pressure against both North Vietnam and the Vietcong in South Vietnam. Johnson agreed with his Secretary of Defense and chose the option that required American escalation (Johnson, 1971, p. 145).

McNamara was using the prepersuasion tactic known as limiting and controlling the number of choices and options. This tactic incorporates the principle of the “least-of-evils” to influence an individual into choosing a predetermined option or decision. According to McNamara, only one of the options he offered Johnson was beneficial to America’s national security. This was the only desirable option when compared to McNamara’s other recommendations. He successfully influenced Johnson by limiting *and* controlling the number of options. McNamara was able to focus the president’s attention on the course of action he wanted him to choose by limiting the number of options to only three. He controlled the options by presenting the information in such a manner that Johnson could not choose the alternates in fear of losing credibility. McNamara wanted Johnson to feel free to make the decision of his own accord, regardless of the fact that the alternate options had been presented as decoys in order to influence the president into choosing the predetermined option: American escalation.

### **3. Johnson Sets Expectations: 1965**

As president, Johnson used the set expectations prepersuasion tactic because it was effective at guiding the public’s interpretations and perceptions. He used it to create a picture or reality of Vietnam that was congruent with his expectations. Setting expectations was used to shape the influence landscape. Johnson’s expectations of a U.S. victory were unrealistic, but they created an alternate reality in the mind of the public. Johnson’s decision to go to war in Vietnam was made on 28 July 1965.

The remarks made in 1965 were the most important of his expectation-setting statements made. Johnson met with his key leaders to determine the best course of action in Vietnam before announcing his decision to the public. His meeting with the Secretary of Defense had a tremendous impact on determining which course of action he would choose. A week prior to the White House press conference, he received a list of possible U.S. courses of action for involvement in Vietnam from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. The first option, according to McNamara, included cutting the nation’s losses and withdrawing under the best conditions possible. This option would almost certainly lead to U.S. humiliation and would be damaging for future U.S. effectiveness on

the world scene. The second called for continuing at the present level and limiting forces to 75,000 while “playing for breaks.” Again, this option would eventually result in U.S. withdrawal under unfavorable circumstances. The third option, recommended by McNamara, was the option that called for expanding U.S. military pressure against both North Vietnam and the Vietcong in South Vietnam. Johnson agreed with his Secretary of Defense and chose the option that required American escalation (Johnson, 1971, p. 145).

Vietnam War Historian David Anderson, author of *The War That Never Ends*, suggests Johnson exaggerate the importance of Vietnam when he set his expectations. Anderson claims, “There is a proclivity when policymakers choose war to exaggerate the results of the intervention. One example of such an exaggeration is couching the reason for continuing the intervention in terms of preserving America’s international credibility” (Anderson, 2007, p. 14). Johnson may have exaggerated the importance of American escalation; however, this exaggeration was an extension of his expectations. These exaggerations shaped the public perception into placing a greater level of importance on the war than had previously been assigned.

#### **4. Johnson’s World War II Analogy: 1965**

The prepersuasion tactic of the metaphor can be used to constrain and focus thought about an issue. Doing this will impact how that issue will be decided. Johnson’s use of an analogy was similar to the metaphor tactic. Analogy has not been classified as a prepersuasion tactic, but its usefulness in comparing two situations to impact cognitive development is a similar concept to that of the metaphor. Like a metaphor, his analogy was effective at influencing his audience in two ways. First, it was used to guide information processing. Second, it suggested a plausible solution for resolving the issue (Pratkanis, 2007, p. 26). The issue had already been decided, but the public’s decision to support the issue had not. Johnson used an analogy to suggest that the United States should go into Vietnam to defeat communist aggression in the same manner it defeated Hitler in Europe in World War II. Yuen Khong, author of *Analogies at War*, describes Johnson’s use of analogies to explain the stakes. Khong observes:

When Johnson announced to the American public his decision to send combat troops to South Vietnam, he invoked a most accessible analogy to explain the stakes: “Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueler conflicts, as we have learned from the lessons of history.”(Khong, 1992, p. 49)

Johnson used this analogy to draw comparisons between the communist threat and the threat that the free world faced two decades earlier during World War II. These images had an impact on how Americans perceived an inevitable war in Vietnam. As a result of prepersuasion tactics, Johnson successfully influenced his public to support his decision for American escalation.

#### **E. THE RESULT OF JOHNSON’S PREPERSUASION**

Johnson’s prepersuasion tactics had their intended effects on public opinion. Prior to his use of prepersuasion tactics, most Americans had not viewed Vietnam as a national priority. Johnson set an agenda, set expectations, and used a powerful analogy to shape the public into the receptive audience that would support his decision to go to war. Robert Dallek observed the impact of Johnson’s prepersuasion influence on public opinion in his book, *Lyndon B. Johnson: Portrait of A President*. He writes:

By the winter of 1965–1966 nearly 60 percent of the country saw the Vietnam War as America’s most urgent problem. The number had more than doubled since the presidential campaign in 1964. Two out of three Americans considered it essential to take a stand in Vietnam, with only 20 percent favoring a pullout over an expanded role for U.S. forces. Seventy-five percent of a sample poll viewed the war as ‘part of our worldwide commitment to stop communism.’ (Dallek, 2004, p. 251)

Why did the majority of U.S. citizens see the Vietnam War as such an urgent problem? Their psychological landscape had been shaped by prepersuasion influence to support the idea of Vietnam that had been created by Johnson. The majority of the public made a conscious decision to consider American involvement in Vietnam as “essential” to thwarting communist expansion.



## **1. Public Opinion Prior to Johnson's Escalation Decision**

John Mueller, author of *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion*, analyzes American public opinion as it relates to the Vietnam War and to the presidents who led the nation during the conflict. Mueller notes the difficulty with justifying the war as necessary. He writes, "Furthermore, because of their limited, faraway nature, it was more difficult to view the wars as necessary from the standpoint of direct American security, although the idea of 'stopping the Communists' was related to this concern" (Mueller, 1973, p. 34). It was Johnson's prerogative to influence the nation to view the war as necessary. The first task of shaping this perception was to make the public aware of the situation in Vietnam. President Johnson accomplished this by placing the war on his agenda. According to a survey conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) in May 1964 the majority of those polled had not placed the same level of importance on maintaining U.S. commitments to South Vietnam as Johnson had expressed at his inauguration. Table 1 illustrates the results of the survey:

| %  | Survey Options                                  |
|----|-------------------------------------------------|
| 4  | Get Out                                         |
| 1  | Raise South Vietnamese standard of living       |
| 6  | Send U.N. force                                 |
| 3  | Maintain present policy                         |
| 5  | Get tougher, put on more pressure (nonmilitary) |
| 4  | Take definite military action                   |
| 4  | Either fight or get out                         |
| 3  | Other                                           |
| 63 | Have given little or no attention to Vietnam    |

Table 1. Have You Given Any Attention to the Developments in South Vietnam? What Do You Think Should Be Done Next in Vietnam? (Gallup Poll, May 1964) (From Mueller, 1973, p. 81)

These results confirm that the majority of Americans surveyed, 63 percent, showed little or no concern towards Vietnam. This survey was taken after Johnson used prepersuasion agenda setting to influence the public to develop cognitions of an impending war (November 1963). He had informed the public of the situation in Southeast Asia that many may not have known about but, according to the results of this survey, was ineffective at influencing the public's perception.

## 2. Public Opinion Following Johnson's Escalation Decision

Johnson set expectation in 1965 when he made the decision to escalate American involvement in Vietnam. This prepersuasion tactic was successful at influencing public support for the war as demonstrated by the results from the following survey. One method of examining the impact of Johnson's expectation setting would be to evaluate public opinion in the months following his announcement. The *Los Angeles Times*, like

the Gallup Organization, conducted public opinion surveys throughout the war. Tables 2 and 3 provide the results of the surveys taken in September and December of 1965. This survey asked participants to choose from one of three recommended courses of action for U.S. involvement in Vietnam (percentage of those with opinion).

| %  | Survey Options                                |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|
| 25 | Withdraw                                      |
| 49 | Hold the line, prevent Communist takeover     |
| 26 | Carry war North at risk of war with Red China |

Table 2. What Do You Think We Should Do About Vietnam? (*Los Angeles Times*, September 1965) (From Mueller, 1973, p. 85)

| %  | Survey Options                                |
|----|-----------------------------------------------|
| 7  | Withdraw                                      |
| 65 | Hold the line, prevent Communist takeover     |
| 28 | Carry war North at risk of war with Red China |

Table 3. What Do You Think We Should Do About Vietnam? (*Los Angeles Times*, December 1965) (From Mueller, 1973, p. 85)

The results of these surveys support the claim that Johnson had successfully influenced public opinion to support the war through expectation setting. Mueller expands on this claim and discusses the rise in public support:

At the same time the percentage with no opinion dropped, suggesting that, as the war began to gather more popular attention, people seem to have been led to form an opinion on it, not led to confusion and doubt from cross-pressures or value conflicts (Mueller, 1973, p. 53)

Perhaps the most important aspect of the surveys examined by Mueller is that the percentage of those surveyed with no opinion decreased as the war became more popular.

The majority of the opinions formed immediately after Johnson set his expectations in July of 1965 support his national objectives. His goal was to lead the public to support his decision to go to war. He achieved this by using prepersuasion social influence to shape public perception. The importance of the situation in Vietnam was created in the minds of his audience as a result of his message. Agenda setting placed the idea, but it was Johnson's expectation setting that had the greatest impact on the public and their cognitions of a war in Vietnam. Figure 7 shows the public opinion for the following months: May of 1964, September of 1965, and December of 1965. Although the options available to those surveyed in 1964 were different than those available in the surveys conducted in 1965 they have been distilled to illustrate the shift in public opinion.

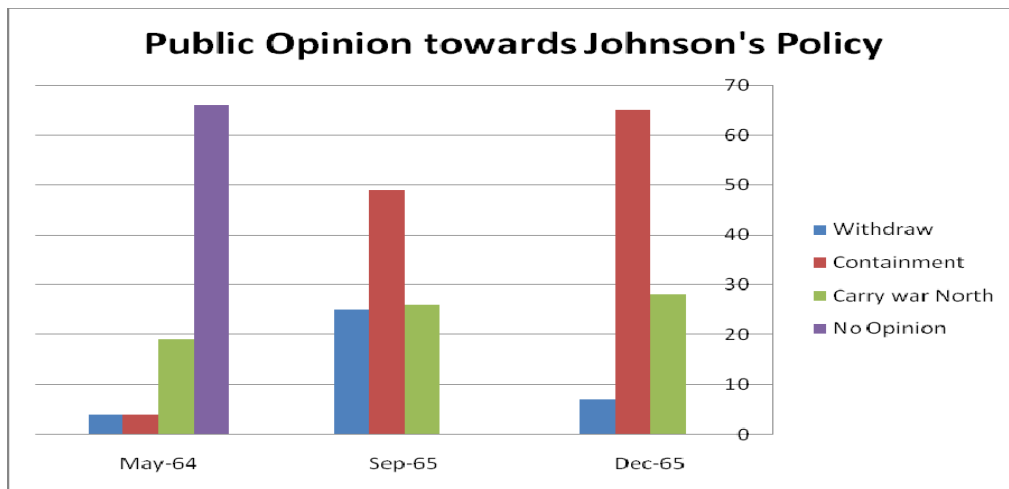


Figure 7. Public Opinion on Johnson's Policy (From Mueller, 1973)

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this thesis was to investigate the impact of prepersuasion social influence tactics on the military decision making process (OODA Loop) as modeled by Boyd. The theories behind Boyd's OODA Loop, prepersuasion social influence, and cognitive development have been analyzed using the case study research model. The World War II and Vietnam War case studies examine how prepersuasion tactics have been used historically to influence individual decision makers as well as how individual decision makers have used prepersuasion to influence a group.

The case study analysis illustrates that prepersuasion impacts the predecision stages of the decision making process. Communicators provide information that they know will impact an individual's cognitive development. These stages, *observation* and *orientation*, are the only stages of Boyd's model vulnerable to prepersuasion influence. *Decision* and *action*, both postdecision stages, occur as a result of how an individual reacts to the situation that has been created by the communicator. Decision makers will create a false reality of the situation by combining the information they receive in the physical environment and past personal experience in dealing with similar situations. In this newly created psychological environment, individuals will alter their perceptions because they are incapable of processing the information that exists in the physical environment. Prepersuasion tactics are effective means of influencing both groups and individuals due to their ability to shape the psychological landscape.

Boyd's model is a useful tool for evaluating the impact of prepersuasion influence on decision making even after the advent of the Information Age. Although information technologies have increased considerably since the model was created, our ability to process information at the rate at which it is received has not. Therefore, the greatest vulnerability in the military decision making process is human input. How automated should decision making be? That depends on the importance of the decision,

however, there will always be a target of influence as long as there is human involvement in the process. How commanders react to social influence will determine whether or not they are successful.

## **B. RECOMMENDATION**

The World War II and Vietnam case studies provide considerable insight into the effectiveness of prepersuasion tactics on influencing both groups and individuals. While differences between the case studies exist, they are both valuable references for developing a set of recommendations for resisting prepersuasion influence for military decision makers. These recommendations are offered as answers to the following three questions:

### **1. How Do Communicators Influence Their Adversaries?**

The adversary's command and control structure should be identified before any social influence attempts are made. Identifying the command structure as well as the decision making process that accompanies it will enable the communicator to shape the situation. Presenting the situation, to include the options available to adversarial decision makers, can ultimately impact the decisions they make. The next step is for the group or individual attempting the influence to take control of the situation. This includes the information and manner at which it is disseminated to the target of influence. Ultimately, the prepersuasion influence tactics will be used to alter the adversary's perception of reality. The communicator can provide information in such a way that targets influence themselves into developing cognitions about a situation that are consistent with those of the communicator. Shaping the cognitive landscape may also lead to the creation of an alternate reality. The predetermined options that favor the communicator are introduced in this newly created psychological environment. The influence campaign is successful if the enemy decision maker selects the predetermined course of action of his own accord.

## 2. How Can Commanders Resist Prepersuasion Influence?

Decision makers are often the target of social influence. Chapter IV examined the impact of social influence on an individual, but did not offer recommendations on how the target of influence (Hitler) could have resisted the prepersuasion tactics. Pratkanis notes the importance for decision makers to resist influence with the following analysis, “simply because we *think* we are immune to persuasion does not necessarily mean we *are* immune” (Pratkanis, 1992, p. 332). In his book, *Age of Propaganda*, Pratkanis offers recommendations on how individuals can prevent propaganda from impacting their decisions. Some of his recommendations for resisting unwanted persuasion apply to military decision makers (Pratkanis, 1992). The following list is adopted and modified from Pratkanis’ recommendations for resisting propaganda. It offers ten measures for commanders to follow to resist prepersuasion social influence.

1. Know the ways of prepersuasion and realize that you personally may be the victim of social influence. This includes the 26 tactics and how each can be used to structure the situation.
2. Monitor your emotions. If you feel that your emotions are being played on, get out of the situation and then analyze what is going on. If you cannot physically remove yourself from the situation, redefine the situation mentally until you can escape. Military decision makers may never be able to “escape” the situation, but they must maintain objectivity in decision making while they re-evaluate the environment.
3. Explore the motivation and credibility of the source of the communication, especially electronic communications that are susceptible to intrusion and manipulation. Ask such questions as, “why is this person telling me this information?” “What does the source have to gain?”

4. Think rationally about any proposal or issue. Ask, “What course of action are being discussed?” What are the arguments in support of the adversary’s position?” “What are the arguments opposing the adversary’s position?”
5. Attempt to understand the full range of options before making a decision. Ask: “Why has my adversary presented these courses of action in this manner?” “What would happen if I chose to attack or defend against a course of action other than what the enemy appears to be taking?”
6. Stop to consider the possibility that any information you receive, even from trusted sources and subordinates, may be false.
7. If you constantly receive the same piece of information from your staff repeatedly ask “why?”
8. If the capability of your defense against an adversary’s course of action looks too good to be true, it probably is.
9. Always ask yourself, “What are the arguments for the adversary’s course of action?” “If I believe they are going to choose a certain course of action, what would it take to prove me wrong?”
10. Avoid being dependent on a single source of information in regards to enemy operations. Encourage decentralized decision making to decrease the adversary’s ability to influence individual commanders.

### **3. How Can Commanders Use Prepersuasion to Influence the Public?**

The Vietnam case study examined Johnson’s use of prepersuasion tactics to influence the public to support his decision. Set expectation and agenda setting were two tactics that were incredibly effective at shaping public perception. Commanders must exploit the current situation and target the psychological landscape of their audience to shape their beliefs. Any of the prepersuasion tactics can be used to influence the public, but they should be chosen with a predetermined course of action in mind. Not only



should commanders exploit the situation, they should take control of it to establish the influence climate most beneficial to sharing their message. Commanders should also use current information technologies and social networks to influence as large an audience possible. Utilizing social network sites as influence channels may increase both the size of the target audience as well as the rate at which it is influenced by prepersuasion tactics.

### **C. FUTURE WORK**

Boyd's OODA Loop model is a simple and effective method for explaining how the military decision making process works. This study examined how the stages of the model are impacted by prepersuasion influence. What was not discussed was the impact of modern information systems technologies on the process. Will Boyd's model stand the test of time or will it become obsolete as military operations become more reliant on information technologies? Developed almost three decades ago, the OODA Loop model may not be applicable to future decision makers. Although much has been written on the military decision making process, there are several questions related to its vulnerability to social influence as a result of modern information systems and technology that need to be researched.

The military has entered the "Information Age" and has increased its use of modern communications technology as a result. The Information Age has, "set in motion a virtual tidal wave of change that is in the process of profoundly affecting both organization and individuals in multiple dimensions" (Alberts, 2003, p. 1). The advent of the Internet had perhaps the greatest impact on how the military shares information, particularly how its decision makers orient themselves to the vast amount of information now available. The accessibility of the Internet as an information conduit for millions of users globally makes it a prime instrument for social influence. Social media networks have recently emerged as one of the most effective means of information sharing on the Internet. Websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter link millions of people to disseminate information at a rate and volume that had been impossible in the past. Can social media networks use social influence tactics to impact the decisions made at the operational and strategic levels?

Another recommendation for future research would be to examine the impact that social influence has on networked decision making. The concept of Network Centric Warfare focuses on the advantages gained by linking entities to create information networks. Network operations allow these entities to work collectively to achieve “synergistic effects”. One of the advantages of operating this way is that these entities do not necessary need to be continuously linked to produce networked results (Alberts, 1999, p. 92). David S. Albers, author of *Network Centric Warfare*, describes the concept:

A network consists of nodes (entities) and the links among them. Nodes do things (sense, decide, act) and information, both as inputs to decisions and in the form of decision themselves, is passed over links from one battlespace entity, or node, to another. (Alberts, 1999, p. 92)

How can prepersuasion influence be used to impact the Network Centric Warfare decision making process? Should a communicator’s target of influence be individual nodes, groups of nodes, or the entire network?

What persuasion tactics did President Johnson employ between September and December of 1965? Surveys conducted by the Los Angeles Times show an increase of almost 25 percent of those surveyed for continuing the containment policy strategy. How did Johnson influence the public into supporting the policy of Communist Containment? Figure 8 illustrates this shift of opinion:

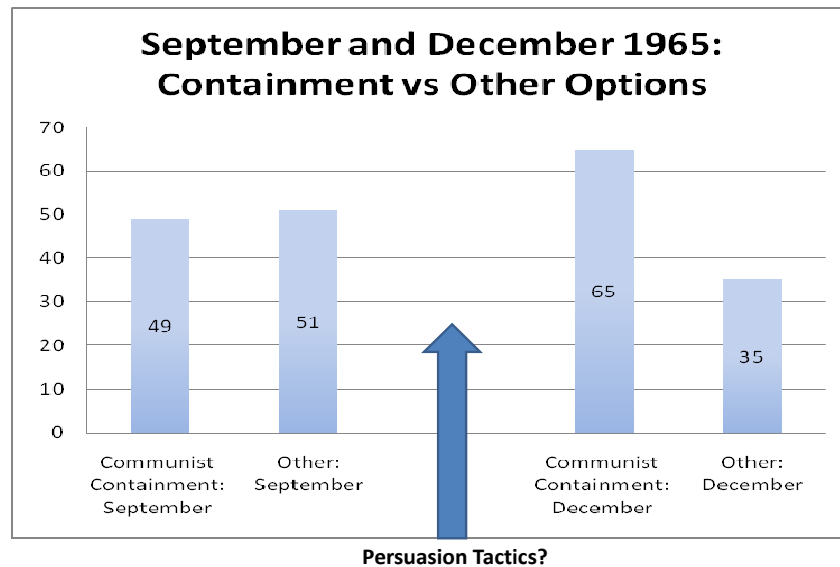


Figure 8. Public Opinion Toward Johnson’s Policy–1965 (From Mueller, 1973)

Finally, the military maintained its hierarchical command structure and traditional decision making processes upon entering the Information Age. In the book *In Athena’s Camp*, John Arquilla recommends altering the current centralized command and control structure. He states:

Since militaries must retain hierarchical command structures at their core, their hybrids should retain—yet flatten—the residual hierarchy, while allowing dispersed maneuver “nodes” to have direct, all-channel contact with each other, and with the higher command. (Arquilla, 1997, p. 440)

Arquilla maintains that a decentralized command and control structure will improve the military’s decision making process. Should the military adopt the concept? Will it become less vulnerable to social influence if the hierarchy becomes flattened?

The military decision making process may change in the future to reflect increased technological capabilities and networked information sharing, but it will always be vulnerable to influence as long as humans remain part of the process. This study has

shown the effectiveness of prepersuasion tactics at influencing both groups as well as individuals. Understanding the impact of these tactics on influencing adversaries and allies alike will benefit future military decision makers.

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