

Concept, Functions and Limitations of Psychological War

Dr. Kanchan Mishra

Associate Professor, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, V.S.S.D. College, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

Psychological warfare (PSYWAR), or the basic aspects of modern psychological operations (PsyOp), have been known by many other names or terms, including Military Information Support Operations (MISO), Psy Ops, political warfare, "Hearts and Minds", and propaganda. The term is used "to denote any action which is practiced mainly by psychological methods with the aim of evoking a planned psychological reaction in other people". Various techniques are used, and are aimed at influencing a target audience's value system, belief system, emotions, motives, reasoning, or behavior. It is used to induce confessions or reinforce attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives, and are sometimes combined with black operations or false flag tactics. It is also used to destroy the morale of enemies through tactics that aim to depress troops' psychological states. Target audiences can be governments, organizations, groups, and individuals, and is not just limited to soldiers. Civilians of foreign territories can also be targeted by technology and media so as to cause an effect in the government of their country. There is evidence of psychological warfare throughout written history. In modern times, psychological warfare efforts have been used extensively. Mass communication allows for direct communication with an enemy populace, and therefore has been used in many efforts. Social media channels and the internet allow for campaigns of disinformation and misinformation performed by agents anywhere in the world.

KEYWORDS: *Psychological, war, concept, functions, limitations, military, tactics, false*

INTRODUCTION

Psychological warfare is the planned tactical use of propaganda, threats, and other non-combat techniques during wars, threats of war, or periods of geopolitical unrest to mislead, intimidate, demoralize, or otherwise influence the thinking or behavior of an enemy. While all nations employ it, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) lists the tactical goals of psychological warfare (PSYWAR) or psychological operations (PSYOP) as:

- Assisting in overcoming an enemy's will to fight
- Sustaining the morale and winning the alliance of friendly groups in countries occupied by the enemy[1,2]
- Influencing the morale and attitudes of people in friendly and neutral countries toward the United States

To achieve their objectives, the planners of psychological warfare campaigns first attempt to gain

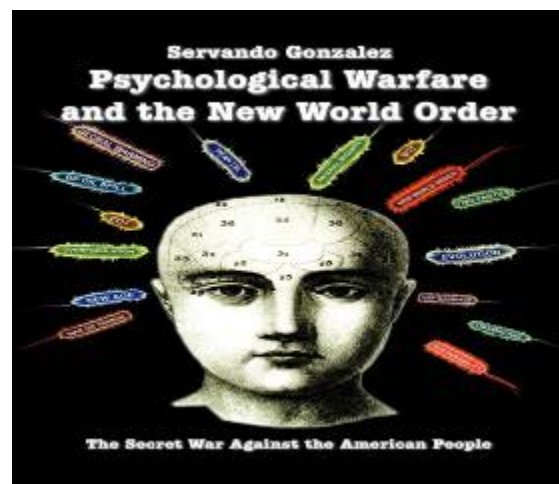
How to cite this paper: Dr. Kanchan Mishra "Concept, Functions and Limitations of Psychological War" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-6 | Issue-2, February 2022, pp.746-752, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd49313.pdf



Copyright © 2022 by author (s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



total knowledge of the beliefs, likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities of the target population. According to the CIA, knowing what motivates the target is the key to a successful PSYOP.

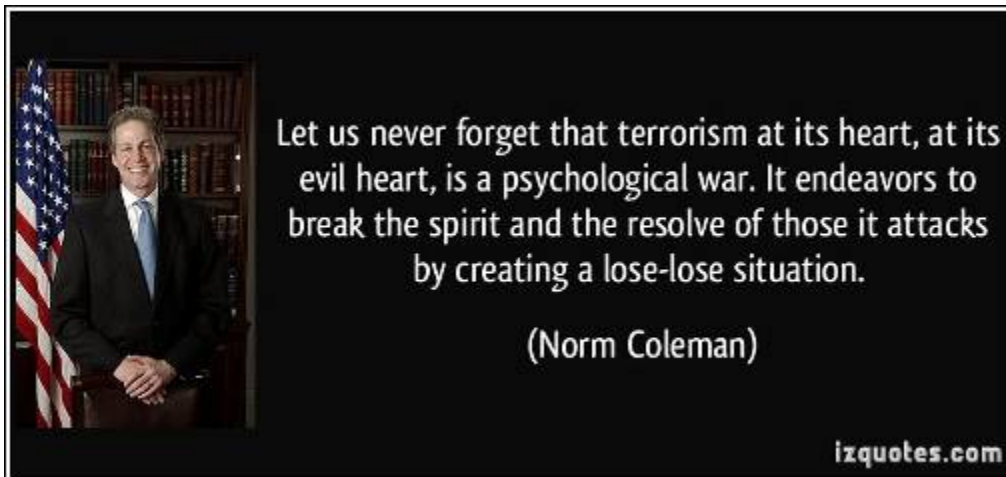


As a non-lethal effort to capture "hearts and minds," psychological warfare typically employs propaganda to influence the values, beliefs, emotions, reasoning, motives, or behavior of its targets. The targets of such propaganda campaigns can include governments, political organizations, advocacy groups, military personnel, and civilian individuals. Simply a form of cleverly "weaponized" information, PSYOP propaganda may be disseminated in any or all of several ways:

➤ Face-to-face verbal communication

- Audiovisual media, like television and movies
- Audio-only media including shortwave radio broadcasts like those of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty or Radio Havana
- Purely visual media, like leaflets, newspapers, books, magazines, or posters

More important than how these weapons of propaganda are delivered is the message they carry and how well they influence or persuade the target audience.



Three Shades of Propaganda

In his 1949 book, *Psychological Warfare Against Nazi Germany*, former OSS (now the CIA) operative Daniel Lerner details the U.S. military's WWII Skyewar campaign. Lerner separates psychological warfare propaganda into three categories:

- White propaganda: The information is truthful and only moderately biased. [3,4]
- Grey propaganda: The information is mostly truthful and contains no information that can be disproven.
- Black propaganda: Literally "fake news," the information is false or deceitful and is attributed to sources not responsible for its creation.

While grey and black propaganda campaigns often have the most immediate impact, they also carry the greatest risk. Sooner or later, the target population identifies the information as being false, thus discrediting the source. As Lerner wrote, "Credibility is a condition of persuasion. Before you can make a man do as you say, you must make him believe what you say."

PSYOP in Battle

On the actual battlefield, psychological warfare is used to obtain confessions, information, surrender, or defection by breaking the morale of enemy fighters.

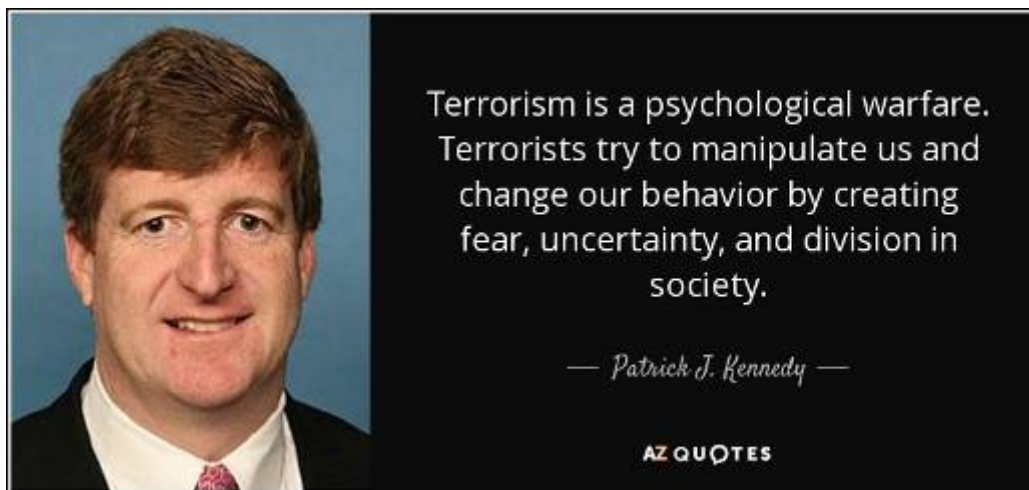
Some typical tactics of battlefield PSYOP include:

- Distribution of pamphlets or flyers encouraging the enemy to surrender and giving instructions on how to surrender safely
- The visual "shock and awe" of a massive attack employing vast numbers of troops or technologically advanced weapons[5,6]
- Sleep deprivation through the continual projection of loud, annoying music or sounds toward enemy troops
- The threat, whether real or imaginary, of the use of chemical or biological weapons
- Radio stations created to broadcast propaganda
- Random use of snipers, booby traps, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs)
- "False flag" events: attacks or operations designed to convince the enemy that they were carried out by other nations or groups

In all cases, the objective of battlefield psychological warfare is to destroy the morale of the enemy leading them to surrender or defect.

Review of Literature

While it might sound like a modern invention, psychological warfare is as old as war itself. When soldiers the mighty Roman Legions rhythmically beat their swords against their shields they were employing a tactic of shock and awe designed to induce terror in their opponents. In the 525 B.C. Battle of Peluseium, Persian forces held cats as hostages in order to gain a psychological advantage over the Egyptians, who due to their religious beliefs, refused to harm cats. To make the number of his troops seem larger than they actually were, 13th century A.D. leader of the Mongolian Empire Genghis Khan ordered each soldier to carry three lit torches at night. The Mighty Khan also designed arrows notched to whistle as they flew through the air, terrifying his enemies. And in perhaps the most extreme shock and awe tactic, Mongol armies would catapult severed human heads over the walls of enemy villages to frighten the residents.[7,8]



During the American Revolution, British troops wore brightly colored uniforms in an attempt to intimidate the more plainly dressed troops of George Washington's Continental Army. This, however, proved to be a fatal mistake as the bright red uniforms made easy targets for Washington's even more demoralizing American snipers. Modern psychological warfare tactics were first used during World War I. Technological advances in electronic and print media made it easier for governments to distribute propaganda through mass-circulation newspapers. On the battlefield, advances in aviation made it possible to drop leaflets behind enemy lines and special non-lethal artillery rounds were designed to deliver propaganda. Postcards dropped over German trenches by British pilots bore notes supposedly handwritten by German prisoners extolling their humane treatment by their British captors.

During World War II, both Axis and Allied powers regularly used PSYOPS. Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany was driven largely by propaganda designed to discredit his political opponents. His furious speeches mustered national pride while convincing the people to blame others for Germany's self-inflicted economic problems. Use of radio broadcast PSYOP reached a peak in World War II. Japan's famous "Tokyo Rose" broadcast music with false information of Japanese military victories to discourage allied forces. Germany employed similar tactics through the radio broadcasts of "Axis Sally." [9,10]



However, in perhaps the most impactful PSYOP in WWII, American commanders orchestrating the "leaking" of false orders leading the German high command to believe the allied D-Day invasion would be launched on the beaches of Calais, rather than Normandy, France.

The Cold War was all but ended when U.S. President Ronald Reagan publicly released detailed plans for a highly sophisticated “Star Wars” Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) anti-ballistic missile system capable of destroying Soviet nuclear missiles before they re-entered the atmosphere. Whether any of Reagan’s “Star Wars” systems could have really been built or not, Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev believed they could. Faced with the realization that the costs of countering U.S. advances in nuclear weapons systems could bankrupt his government, Gorbachev agreed to reopen détente-era negotiations resulting in lasting nuclear arms control treaties.

More recently, the United States responded to the September 11, 2001 terror attacks by launching the Iraq War with a massive “shock and awe” campaign intended to break the Iraqi army’s will to fight and to protect the country’s dictatorial leader Saddam Hussein. The U.S. invasion began on March 19, 2003, with two days of non-stop bombing of Iraq’s capital city of Baghdad. On April 5, U.S. and allied Coalition forces, facing only token opposition from Iraqi troops, took control of Baghdad. On April 14, less than a month after the shock and awe invasion began, the U.S. declared victory in the Iraq War. In today’s ongoing War on Terror, the Jihadist terrorist organization ISIS uses social media websites and other online sources to conduct psychological campaigns designed to recruit followers and fighters from around the world.

Discussion and Results

Paul Linebarger, one of the foremost theoreticians on psychological warfare in the United States, stated, “When ‘Psychological Warfare’ in its turn became disreputable, ‘information services’ took its place. If ‘information services’ get to be recognized for the propaganda which they are, I have no doubt that some careful and pious scholar or official will find an even prettier label to apply to the same old activity”.



As the warning entailed, we have now ended up with the term Military Information Support Operations (MISO) as some strange overarching name to classify the multitude of activities modern psychological operations, or PSYOP, soldiers find themselves conducting. MISO activities now include everything from cyber warfare, deception, and social manipulation, to kinetic actions for psychological effect. This MISO terminology supports two false narratives, first that it is merely informational, and secondly that it is just a support activity. However, it did achieve the government’s official goal under Secretary of Defense Robert Gates trying to change the concept of an ancient governmental activity into something more palatable and benign. Thus, as part of the goal of understanding the principles of psychological warfare, this work posits the following terms associated with this activity in which modern psychological warfare practitioners operate.[11]

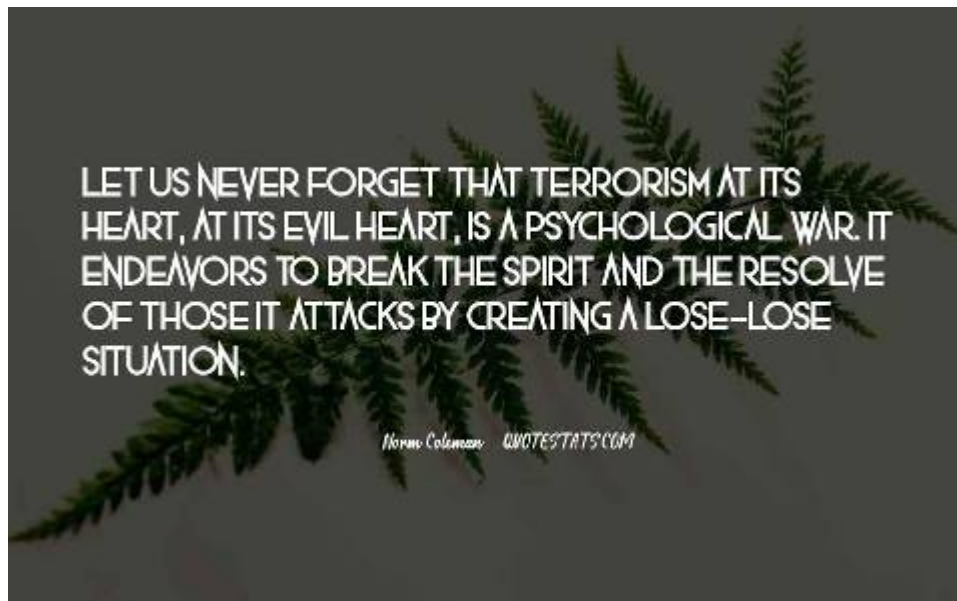
Psychological Warfare produces effects in the “real” world

The United States military is infatuated with the advent of cyber warfare and social media activities. These platforms and emerging domains provide faster access to target audiences and increased capabilities for nations and non-nation state actors to bypass state defenses. Inasmuch as these domains are novel and vogue in a military context, they also must be placed in the correct frame of reference. Regardless of how many social media posts and e-mails are delivered to a target audience, if they do not provide a tangible and measurable result, then our goal has not been accomplished. Disseminating television and radio commercials, or just memes, is merely dissemination of information, not the effective goal of psychological warfare. Only when psychological warfare produces “real world” effects does it transition into a weapon of strategy. It is in the realm of effects-based results that psychological warfare exists. Like daily e-mails from the Nigerian Prince promising

riches, it has no effect unless the individual participates in the scheme. This is the same of psychological operations; effective influence campaigns require not only participation, but also calculable, effects-based outcomes.

The target audience dictates TIME in psychological warfare

One common phrase uttered by psychological warfare professionals is “behavior change takes time.” PSYOP soldiers often utter this phrase in consternation to commanders who are attempting achieving results in the real world. This phrase does nothing to help convince leaders of psychological warfare efficacy. Why should a commander care about the psychological aspect of conflict if their force redeploys before effects are measured? The current paradigm is ineffective and misleading. The target audience is the force that dictates or reflects behavioral decisions and effects, not the arbitrary timeframe of the psychological warfare campaign. Psychological warfare personnel must account for the pace of the target audience’s behavioral change in their planning process. By understanding the timeframe constraining a behavior, we introduce plans capable of creating psychological effects that are temporally acceptable to a decision maker.[12]



Behavior change in a target audience results from a mixture of prospect theory and time discounting. Prospect theory describes how a target audience understands their ability to make decisions based on credible outcomes and risk. Time discounting defines an audience’s preference to a current value over a perceived greater future outcome. Members of a target audience must analyze their ability to act in an environment in order to determine the risk of taking a new behavior. Any behavior that currently satisfies, or is sufficient enough to meet the desire of the individual, will be preferable to a behavior that might improve their situation in the future. Thus, a psychological operation is predicated on a matrix of factors that take into account the manipulation of an individual’s desired outcomes, the risk that the target audience will continue its current behavior, and the risk of the target audience not engaging in the desired behavior over a specific time period. Psychological operations are designed to change a behavior; it is always ultimately a sparring match between adjusting the behavioral economics of the target audience and achieving results within the available time allotted to a psychological activity.

Psychological Warfare is unrestricted

This paper provides some clarification on psychological warfare that widens the scope and theory of its application. Psychological warfare is a tool of the state that bridges all of our DIME capabilities. In this, we acknowledge that psychological warfare is unrestricted in all domains. Psychological warfare as a diplomatic function provides an execution arm for national strategic objectives. In the informational dimension, psychological warfare operates to change attitudes and behaviors of target audiences. The military

domain is where the majority of our psychological warfare capabilities reside. While this is the primary source of psychological warfare professionals, this craft is not the exclusive domain of the military. Organizations such as the United States Information Agency (USIA) and the Global Engagement Center (GEC) extend interagency control over psychological capabilities for the state. Finally, in the economic domain, psychological warfare has been used in dollar diplomacy and through the use of the International Monetary Fund to influence the behaviors of friendly and competitive states. On

operational-level objectives we see the use of counter threat finance operations to influence the attitudes and behaviors of foreign entities. Therefore, psychological warfare cannot be constrained and must be able to maximize the use of all state resources and domains.[13]

Implications

Most modern uses of the term psychological warfare refer to the following military methods:

- Demoralization:
 - Distributing pamphlets that encourage desertion or supply instructions on how to surrender
 - Shock and awe military strategy
 - Projecting repetitive and disturbing noises and music for long periods at high volume towards groups under siege like during Operation Nifty Package
 - Tolerance indoctrination, so that the totems and culture of a defeated enemy can be removed or replaced without conflict.
- Propaganda radio stations, such as Lord Haw-Haw in World War II on the "Germany calling" station
- Renaming cities and other places when captured, such as the renaming of Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City after Communist victory in the Vietnam War
- False flag events
- Use of loudspeaker systems to communicate with enemy soldiers
- Terrorism
- The threat of chemical weapons
- Information warfare

Conclusions

Psychological warfare techniques involve the analysis of long-term psychological strengths and weaknesses of both individuals and societies to ascertain their most vulnerable points. On an individual level, this is accomplished based on the use of Personality Psychology and Combat Psychiatry with the goal of identifying "psychological phenomena applicable to the development of psychological weapons.

Combat Psychiatry examines the psychological effects of warfare on the individual.

5 enemies of individual survival:

- pain
- cold
- hunger/thirst
- fatigue,
- boredom/loneliness

By exploiting these factors, psychological warfare attempts to focus on suffering rather than death

Typical psychological reaction pattern in battle

- apprehensive enthusiasm
- resignation: chronically depressed state, yet efficient execution of the "war routine"
- anxious apprehension: most vulnerable psychological state Characterized by the following:
 - overwhelmed with loneliness
 - appetite loss
 - guilt
 - lessening of group identification
 - withdrawal of physical and emotional investment
 - refusal to fight
 - going AWOL [13]

References

- [1] "Forces.gc.ca". Journal.forces.gc.ca. Retrieved 18 May 2011.
- [2] Szunyogh, Béla (1955). Psychological warfare; an introduction to ideological propaganda and the techniques of psychological warfare. United States: William-Frederick Press. p. 13. Retrieved 11 February 2015.
- [3] Chekinov, S. C.; Bogdanov, S. A. "The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War" (PDF). Military Theory Monthly = Voennaya Mysl. United States: Military Thought: 16. ISSN 0869-5636. Archived from the original (PDF) on 20 February 2015. Retrieved 11 February 2015.
- [4] Doob, Leonard W. "The Strategies of Psychological Warfare." Public Opinion Quarterly 13.4 (1949): 635–644. Soc INDEX with Full Text. Web. 20 February 2015.
- [5] Wall, Tyler (September 2010). U.S Psychological Warfare and Civilian Targeting. United States: Vanderbilt University. p. 289. Retrieved 11 February 2015.
- [6] Kirdemir, Baris (2019). "Hostile influence and emerging cognitive threats in cyberspace". Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies.
- [7] Lance B. Curke Ph.D., The Wisdom of Alexander the Great: Enduring Leadership Lessons From the Man Who Created an Empire (2004) p. 66
- [8] David Nicolle, The Mongol Warlords: Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan, Hulegu, Tamerlane (2004) p. 21
- [9] George H. Quester (2003). Offense and Defense in the International System.

- Transaction Publishers. p. 43. ISBN 9781412829939. Retrieved 19 March 2016.
- [10] Diogenes Laertius. Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers. Archived from the original on 26 June 2017. Retrieved 16 February 2017.
- [11] Jump up to:^a ^b "ALLIED PSYOP OF WWI". Retrieved 17 December 2012.
- [12] Linebarger, Paul Myron Anthony (2006). Psychological Warfare. University of Chicago Press. Retrieved 7 February 2013.
- [13] "The Battle for the Mind: German and British Propaganda in the First World War". Quadri.wordpress.com. 25 April 2008.

