

Preface

The Information in Warfare Working Group (I2WG) of the United States Army War College is pleased to present this anthology of selected student work from Academic Year 2006 representing examples of well-written and in-depth analyses on the vital subject of Information in Warfare. The charter of the working group calls for it to coordinate and recommend the design, development and integration of content and courses related to the information element of power into the curriculum to prepare students for senior leadership positions. This publication is an important component of that effort.

Interestingly, one needs to go back to the Reagan administration to find the most succinct and pointed mention of information as an element of power in formal government documents.¹ Subsequent national security documents allude to different aspects of information but without a specific strategy or definition. Still, it is generally accepted in the United States government today that information is an element of national power along with diplomatic, military and economic power...and that information is woven through the other elements since their activities will have an informational impact.² Given this dearth of official documentation, Drs. Dan Kuehl and Bob Nielson proffered the following definition of the information element: “Use of information content and technology as strategic instruments to shape fundamental political, economic, military and cultural forces on a long-term basis to affect the global behavior of governments, supra-governmental organizations, and societies to support national security.”³ Information as power is wielded in a complex environment consisting of the physical, information, and cognitive domain.

Increasingly, however, the United States finds itself falling behind in its ability to wield the information element of power. And, while it certainly is a military “superpower” one has to question whether the United States maintains that same status with regard to information.

The current information environment has leveled the playing field for not only nation states, but non-state actors, multinational corporations and even individuals to affect strategic outcomes with minimal information infrastructure and little capital expenditure. Anyone with a camera cell phone and personal digital device with internet capability understands this. Former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld expressed his frustration with this environment recently: “If I were grading, I would say we probably deserve a D or a D-plus as a country as to how well we’re doing in the battle of ideas that’s taking place in the world today. And I’m not going to suggest that it’s easy, but we have not found the formula as a country.”⁴

On the other hand, the United States military has increasingly leveraged advances in information infrastructure and technology to gain advantages on the modern battlefield. One example from Operation Iraqi Freedom is the significant increase in situational awareness from network centric operations that enabled the military to swiftly defeat Iraqi forces in major combat operations.⁵

Clearly, managing the “message” while controlling the necessary technological “means” represent critical challenges in today’s information environment. We hope that this anthology will serve not only to showcase the efforts of the College but to inform the broader body of knowledge as the Nation struggles to operate effectively within this environment and to counter an adversary who so effectively exploits it.

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