About the Workshop

The "Information Operations and Winning the Peace" workshop, held at the U.S. Army War College (USAWC), Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, was a collaboration between the War College's Center for Strategic Leadership (CSL) and the Advanced Network Research Group, University of Cambridge (UK). It brought together, over a three-day period (29 November to 1 December), an audience of some 60 leaders and practitioners representing the military, national security, intelligence and interagency communities, as well as academia. It included representatives from the U.S., UK and Canada. The venue was CSL's Collins Hall and the workshop structure consisted of introductory expert briefings followed by small group discussions. Three case studies drawn from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict served as the "driver" for small group work. These case studies examined aspects of the second Intifada phase of that conflict (circa 2002) and looked at the realities and challenges of managing "information effects" in a counterinsurgency at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. The case studies provided a jumping off point for discussion of the issues and challenges facing U.S. and coalition militaries in adapting to the complexities of the "long war." The workshop was an unclassified event, and the Israeli-Palestinian case studies allowed participants to engage issues without prejudice or risk to on-going operations.

About this Report

This report was prepared by Deirdre Collings and Rafal Rohozinski of the Advanced Network Research Group, University of Cambridge, with substantive inputs from Dennis Murphy, Cindy Ayers, Dave Cammons and Jim White of the USAWC. Special thanks go out to Jim White and Bill Chanteleau (USAWC) for their support in providing transcripts of the workshop sessions and gathering research materials that supported the workshop and this report, and to Ritchie Dion for his detailed and exacting layout editing. Finally, a word of thanks to Brigadier General Vince Brooks, U.S. Army, Lieutenant General David W. Barno, U.S. Army, and Mr. Robert Petersen, U.S. Department of State, for their invaluable engagement with the workshop participants, which enriched the discussion and added greatly to the enthusiasm with which these difficult topics were debated. An abridged version of this report is available online at http://cbnet/orgs/usacsl/index.asp

Shifting Fire

SHIFTING FIRE

Information Effects in Counterinsurgency and Stability Operations

A Workshop Report

By

Deirdre Collings and Rafal Rohozinski

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Executive Agent for the Workshop Report:
United States Army War College

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Foreword

In the global era, information has become a geo-strategic asset on which all military operations depend. However, information superiority is more than just the ability to muster superior information for the accurate and timely application of force. It is also the ability to compete in an increasingly complex and globally connected information environment wherein successful "textbook" tactical actions may risk serious strategic reverses or political "blowback." Senior Department of Defense (DOD) leadership was quick to recognize the importance of systematizing the military's approach to coordinating action in the information sphere. As a result, in quick succession, Information Operations (IO) evolved from a collection of supporting capabilities to a core DOD competence. However, the process of adapting and employing this capability has proven neither easy, nor straightforward.

Rapid adaptation has proven difficult for institutional and cultural reasons. For decades, the U.S. military has been organized, resourced and trained to prevail in the physical realm. U.S. commanders are expert in the art of force-on-force engagements, but less adept at recognizing the links between kinetic action and the "information effects" they generate, and the impact this can have on the overall intent of U.S. strategy. Equally important, the military is still adapting to operating in an increasingly interconnected and integrated global media environment, where anyone armed with a hundred dollar digital camera and access to the Internet can become an "information warrior."

Adaptation is also challenging because of the rapidly evolving contemporary operating environment where the U.S. finds itself fighting a global war on terrorism, while simultaneously pursuing counterinsurgency and security, stability and reconstruction operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In all cases, the context in which U.S. forces operate has become more complex, encompassing an overarching battle of ideas, fought on the local level over the "hearts and minds" of the indigenous populations.

Adding to the complexity is the confusion of the modern battle space in which traditional state-based militaries have given way to an amorphous and ill-defined array of non-state actors ranging from local militias to networks of violent, ideologically-motivated militants. Even within a single theater the situation facing U.S. forces may vary – a condition which U.S. Army War College scholar Dr. Conrad Crane has dubbed "mosaic war," wherein U.S. forces are required to shift rapidly from combat to stability operations, or may find that both exist at the same time within a relatively compact geographic area.

As the U.S. military learns from its recent operational experiences, the necessity of thinking about "information effects" as both the intent and consequences of the deliberate use of force has come to the fore. If IO is meant to accomplish a planned intent, then the concept of "information effects" compels a broader analytical lens that includes the unintended consequences of both IO and kinetic actions.

While the U.S. and coalition militaries have rapidly moved towards an effects-based planning model for operations (incorporating IO as a major logical line of operations), anticipating informational effects that may be culturally specific, or dependent on a myriad of exogenous factors, continues to be challenging and raises a number of difficult and controversial questions for commanders, as well as the military and political leadership. For

example, how does one properly assess the potential for strategic blowback resulting from kinetic actions within the planning process, so as to avoid having the use of force become a liability to the broader aims of the global war on terror (and the all important "battle for ideas" on which victory is premised)? Is it possible to leverage IO to simultaneously compel and attract opponents and indigenous populations without the risk of message confusion or "information fratricide"? On a more fundamental level, is it possible to avoid becoming "effected" by your own strategic communication and IO in a globalized media environment? These are difficult questions without clear-cut answers.

At a practical level, implementing the vision of full spectrum "information dominance" envisioned by DOD's "Transformation" and "IO Roadmap" documents remains ambitious and complex, leading to some confusion and frustration as concepts are applied in "real time" under conditions of "learning under fire." For example, while the IO Roadmap (and 2006 IO Joint Doctrine)[1] has done much to define and streamline IO, it remains a collection of related and specialized practices. Some competencies, such as Electronic Warfare and Computer Network Attack are technically specialized and possess measures of effectiveness that are clear and quantifiable. Others, such as Psychological Operations (PSYOP), yield more subtle and difficult-to-measure effects, which, according to a recent review of lessons learned, are often poorly understood by commanders who prefer to stick to more clearly measurable activities and outcomes (usually kinetic).[2] Army and Marine Corps leaders have also expressed frustration with constantly changing definitions, and the fact that many of the IO capabilities exist at "echelons above reality" for troops operating at the tactical level (Paschall 2005). There is also a tension inherent within IO and its constituent and associated competencies. Public Affairs Officers, in particular, have expressed concern that their core mission (to inform) is being interpolated with that of IO (to influence), which could lead to a "crisis of credibility" with the media and various publics (Keeton and McCann 2005).

At the same time, senior officers with recent field experience in Afghanistan and Iraq have noted that existing doctrine is out of step with the reality of the field.[3] Put bluntly: "There is no existing doctrine for the employment of the U.S. Army as an army of occupation tasked to establish a civilian government for a fractious and resistant population."[4] While the U.S. has fought counterinsurgencies in the past, they have not been part of mainstream U.S. military doctrine or education since the end of the Vietnam war, which means that the U.S. has had to re-learn lessons in the field.

An IO doctrine specific to stability operations in the midst of a counterinsurgency is also notably absent. While this is now being addressed, and the U.S. is learning quickly from its experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, it also means that IO and "informational effects" are being experimented and implemented at the field level, and at the discretion of commanders. While this ad hoc approach has the advantage of rapid evolution and flexibility, it has also created problems for the continuity of effort, and has, at times, led to the impression of incoherence, especially in the coordination of strategic messages.

1. Department of Defense, *Information Operations, Joint Publication 3-13 (Washington: February 2006).*
2. A National Defense University study notes that PSYOP commanders felt that their specific role may be further underrepresented if the designated IO planner does not have a background or appreciation of PSYOP. See, (Lamb 2005).
3. This was noted by flag officers who participated in the USAWC workshop reflecting on their experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. The need to develop and adjust IO related doctrine is also noted by several other serving senior officers, see, for example (Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005).
4. Cited from a dissertation submitted to the U.S. Army's Command and General Staff College in 2004 assessing U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine and its implications for operations in Iraq, see (Graff 2004).

The workshop on which this report is based occurred at an interesting historical juncture, just prior to the release of the updated Information Operations doctrine, and draft Counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, as well as the formal adoption of Security, Stability, Transition and Reconstruction Operations (SSTRO) as an accepted DOD transition mission. As a result, the insights and record of debate contained within this report reflect the tensions, frustrations and expectations among senior practitioners. Some of these challenges have been subsequently addressed by the new doctrine(s), while others remain unresolved.

The title adopted for this report – "Shifting Fire" – captures the essence of the task and challenge facing commanders and practitioners as they seek to understand and leverage information effects in an increasingly complex and networked world, where assessing the nature of threats and determining appropriate and proportional responses is increasingly difficult, and requires an interagency process at all levels. While the report captures important insights, it does not provide any clear-cut answers. Rather, it points to the complexity and scope of the challenges, which are elements for a roadmap for engagement.

Finally, the workshop and this report are the result of a unique international collaboration between the U.S. Army War College (Center for Strategic Leadership) and the Advanced Network Research Group (University of Cambridge). It demonstrates the vital importance of maintaining open channels between allies, and between the military, intelligence and academic communities as we collectively assess the challenge of collective global security. While perspectives differ, and conversations are sometimes heated and tough, it is through the spirit of engagement that a greater wisdom can be sought.

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Executive summary

IO is (or at least should be) the main effort tactically, operationally and strategically in the current phase of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). At the global level, this effort is about winning the "war of ideas." At the theater level, the task is to combat asymmetrical adversaries, while establishing security, transforming the basis of government and extending the legitimacy of host nations. The central objective in COIN/SSTRO is to win the confidence and loyalty of "the people," so that they willingly support the host nation and your presence, rather than the insurgents. The central fight, therefore, is to establish the legitimacy and credibility of your agenda, your allies, and your actions in the eyes of the population, while discrediting those of the insurgents.

The "war of ideas" is information-led...

These new war-winning imperatives greatly expand the role of information and perception management, which become primary aspects of the fight. "IO" needs to be considered beyond the doctrinal concept of five core capabilities aligned to influence opposing forces or shape the battlefield. Rather, everything that the military does and says in theater becomes a defacto information operation: all actions and words create *informational effects* in the perceptions of the population, whether intended or not. These effects are made even more difficult by today's Global Information Environment (GIE), which levels the communication playing field, empowers asymmetric adversaries, and complicates the messaging picture due to the interconnectedness of different audiences and "real time" media reporting.

...which greatly expands the boundaries of "IO"

This report represents the findings of a three-day workshop – "Information Operations and Winning the Peace" – which brought together an international group of some 60 IO practitioners from the military, national security and intelligence communities, as well as Middle East subject matter experts (SMEs). The workshop used case studies drawn from the Israeli-Palestinian experience (the second Intifada phase) as a "jumping off" point for discussion of IO intentions and effects at the tactical, operational and strategic levels. The case study debates yielded 13 "takeaways" with general significance for thinking about the informational dimensions of power in COIN. (See Box A, next page.) Participants built out from the Israeli-Palestinian context to address issues and challenges around "informational effects" that are facing the U.S. military and coalition members in current theaters of operation. Their main observations, conclusions and issues requiring further consideration are captured in this report.

The workshop explored issues and challenges of IO in COIN/SSTRO

Winning the peace in COIN/SSTRO: Twelve framing observations

Workshop discussions yielded 12 inter-related "framing observations" on "winning the peace" in COIN/SSTRO:

1. No single actor can control the information sphere. In today's wired world, just about anyone can conduct low-tech, yet sophisticated, "information operations" with a global reach.

The GIE cannot be owned

2. In COIN, the center of gravity (COG) is the population, not the insurgent. An insurgency requires the support or acquiescence of the local population for all forms of intelligence and logistical support.

Box A. Informational effects: Summary of takeaways from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies**

1. **Never assume you are on the moral high ground, and that you therefore don't need to message.** (Perceptions of moral authority/legitimacy)

2. **An intervening armed state tends to be seen as "Goliath", while non-state actors that resist are often cast as "David."** (Perceptions of moral authority/legitimacy)

3. **Targeting insurgent leaders won't stop the resistance and the resulting informational effects may fuel further radicalization.** (Tactics versus strategy)

4. **Direct action against a threat may create positive informational effects with home audiences, but negative informational effects in the COIN theatre.** (Informational effects: challenge of different audiences)

5. **When a campaign's strategic narrative contradicts the observed realities of your soldiers on the ground, it can hollow out the army's morale.** (Informational effects: challenge of different audiences)

6. **Eliminating insurgents won't stop the resistance or the terror tactics.** (Tactics versus strategy)

7. **When it comes to rumors of war-fighting gone wrong, the first stories onto the wire stick. Even if these stories prove to be exaggerated or false, the damage to your reputation, and moral legitimacy, is hard to erase.** (Information sequel: perceptions of moral authority)

8. **Humanitarian action undertaken to limit civilian casualties should be documented and communicated before, during and after action.** (Informational sequel and prequel: perceptions of legitimacy; preempting and dispelling rumors)

9. **Even if you don't trust certain media, engage them. Restricting media gives an informational advantage to your adversary.** (Information management: perceptions of legitimacy)

10. **Western democracies have low tolerance for the moral ambiguities of kinetic action. This is especially so when, in the heat of battle, mistakes or civilian casualties occur. Kinetic action that violates the law of war creates informational effects that decrease domestic and Western support.** (Informational effects: perceptions of legitimacy)

11. **Political messages that target domestic audiences can spillover to other audiences, and create detrimental informational effects in the COIN theater.** (Informational effects: GIE and challenge of different audiences)

12. **Cohesive all-of-government coordination can yield synchronization of the message, but not necessarily the effects.** (Informational effects: perceptions of legitimacy/perception management)

13. **Information Operations need to keep going, even after the physical action is over.** (Information sequel: perception management)

**** Takeaways are elaborated in Appendix C.**

The COIN/SSTRO battlespace is different

3. The primary objective is to attract and keep the people on your side.
4. The main "fire" is informational: The task is to discredit the insurgent's strategy and means in the eyes of the population.
5. The insurgent's advantage: They understand that the fight is for the loyalty and support of their people. Their principle "fires" are informational and political – that is how they are organized to fight.
6. The U.S. disadvantage: IO continues to be focused more on supporting tactical physical wins, than on creating strategic informational effects.
7. The military cannot go it alone: All dimensions of national power must be leveraged and coordinated in COIN/SSTRO.

The challenge of response...

8. An effective and coordinated information strategy requires a clearly defined strategic end-state, comprehensively understood.
9. The core challenge of COIN in SSTRO: To convince "the people" that your presence, agenda and local allies offer a more legitimate and credible future than do the insurgents.
10. The primacy of informational effects: Everything you do and say affects the people's perception of your legitimacy.
11. The imperative of message resonance: In COIN/SSTRO, "message dominance" is determined not by its pervasive presence, but by its resonance with the indigenous population.
12. The need for message consistency and coherence across all U.S. Government (USG) actors: All plans, actions and IO campaigns need to be considered from an overall strategic informational effects perspective, that is, their effects on the population's perceptual environment, and subsequent behaviors and allegiances.

Shifting fire: The changed nature of the battlespace

The fight for hearts and minds...

In COIN/SSTRO IO and informational effects are less about compelling adversaries or shaping the battlefield and more about countering an adversary while trying to win the allegiance and trust of the people who support or acquiesce to that adversary. This altered "battlespace" requires unconventional ways and means.

Kinetic action to counter insurgents can create negative informational effects with the wider population, and thereby lead to strategic losses. Insurgents are often blood relatives of the wider population, and/or provide community services and social benefits, and/or claim to represent community grievances. Killing insurgents and their leaders often fuels future recruits and may also radicalize the movement (with more extreme leaders stepping up to the plate). It also eliminates potential future negotiating partners. History has many examples where yesterday's resistance leader/enemy becomes today's political leader/ally.

...is information led

"Informational fire" is more important than conventional fire. The central task is to discredit the insurgent's strategy and action in the eyes of the wider population. This type of fight can only be information led. Tactical action should be geared to gathering information and evidence that shows up the contradictions in what the insurgent says he is doing (e.g., "fighting for the people") and what he is actually doing

(e.g., firing from behind women). This evidence and associated information strategy, however, must be grounded in a meticulous cultural/situational understanding of what is sensitive to your adversary's legitimacy and credibility, which remains a challenge for outsiders.

The military has a role to play...

Ultimately, ending an insurgency requires that motivations be addressed. This kicks the problem up to the political and interagency level. However, as the force on the ground, the military also plays a role:

- To ensure the safety and security of the population, which can help to win over those who acquiesce to the insurgency out of fear, or whose support for insurgent methods is wavering.
- To document evidence that discredits the insurgent's strategy in the eyes of the local population.
- To ensure own solider actions do not alienate the population and/or increase their motivation to support the insurgents.
- To have the "hammer in reserve."
- To play a role in keeping the channels of communication open.

...but cannot go it alone.

Effective COIN/SSTRO requires the leveraging and coordination of all lines of USG power – diplomatic, information, military and economic (DIME). *"It is no longer a matter of exercising a military option with IO in support of it."* Participants concurred that "we should all work together" to create strategic informational effects, but recognized that strong organizational challenges remain. The military needs clear guidance on the proposed end-state and overall information strategy, but this strategic vision, and the overall coordination capacity, is sometimes lacking.

The challenge of response: The battle for legitimacy

The central fight is for legitimacy and credibility...

Ultimately, the war for hearts and minds is a battle for perceived legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the population. "Message resonance" with the target population is key. To date, this has proven challenging. Often U.S. messaging is dismissed because its content and delivery are insufficiently tailored to the concerns and idioms of the target audience. Insurgents *know* how to reach their people emotionally with arguments that are *felt* to be legitimate; outsiders have to work much harder. Participants discussed three challenges that information strategists must address in order to craft messages that resonate in the hearts and minds of foreign populations:

...which is influenced by how the people "see" the U.S...

How the U.S. itself is perceived. *"We may not consider ourselves to be occupiers, but that doesn't answer the political question that the audience we have to influence may see us as imperialists,. Unless we factor in how they see us, we are wasting our time."* Baseline perceptions of the U.S. and its intentions are shaped by many things, including:

- U.S. past historical actions in the area, which form an "informational prequel" against which present intentions and actions are assessed.
- U.S. regional friendships: Strong support for Israel and certain authoritarian Arab regimes negatively influence the perceptions of U.S. intentions at the popular level in the Arab and Islamic worlds.

- Inadvertent Hubris: Outsiders have commented that American messaging often assumes it is on the moral high ground, which is not necessarily the best way to reach skeptical target audiences.
- Other's expectations that all U.S. actions – including war-fighting – will uphold the values that America claims to represent (e.g., dignity and worth of all human beings). Actions that contravene these values hollow out its legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of foreign audiences, and strike a blow against the "war of ideas."

...by the local resonance of message content...

Creating legitimate and comprehensible message content. Crafting legitimate messages that resonate requires comprehensive **cultural capability** as well as fine-tuned, ear-to-the-ground **situational capability** (indepth knowledge of local social networks, power relations and issue clusters, which can vary greatly between locales in a mosaic war). Participants were concerned that current capabilities were not sufficient to prevail in the information-led fight.

...and by message delivery and consistency.

Enhancing message credibility. Credibility is measured by the degree to which you are trusted and believed. Without credibility, there can be no legitimacy. Participants discussed six elements that can enhance message credibility:

- Engage local messengers with good social capital.
- Engage local media, including those you consider to be "hostile."
- Ensure message continuity after physical action, to explain and reassure.
- Ensure your soldiers don't compromise your message that "we are here to help you." Troops at the lowest levels need to understand that their behavior creates "information effects" with the population, and can have potential strategic repercussions.
- If you promise something, deliver it.
- Maintain consistency and credibility of messaging across different audiences. The interconnectedness of the GIE makes it difficult to maintain message consistency and to de-conflict and synchronize IO and PA. Message "spillover" creates challenges across different "in theater" intentions, operations and audiences, and when messages intended for foreign audiences find their way back home, and when messages intended for domestic consumption are beamed back to foreign audiences (creating negative informational effects).

Enduring challenges: The 'big picture'

We understand what "should" be done to prevail in COIN...

Rapidly evolving events and in-field learning are outpacing the military's ability to fundamentally transform itself at the overall institutional level, with negative knock-on effects at the field level. In big picture terms, participants discussed five key challenges:

Institutionally and culturally, the priority is still on kinetic war-fighting skills. This is where the money and training goes.

Force turnover timeframes are too short for effective IO. Effective IO requires "time on the ground." Moreover, force turnover can sometimes incur a strategic setback due to differences in force posture, training and approach to the locals.

...but the necessary support system is still lacking.

How do we achieve information cohesion across agencies and levels, and who is in charge? Clear policy guidance is not always present, or present at all levels.

Participants expressed three concerns:

- Top down: Who is responsible for overall "message cohesion"? There was a real confusion over how all the USG pieces are meant to fit together.
- Bottom up: Who is empowered to adjust "informational "fire" to ensure message relevance? The need for flexibility and responsiveness suggests that local ad hoc adaptation is critical. But overall message coherence across different audiences/ locales suggests the need for higher-order guidance.
- How do we prevent "information fratricide?"

Can we expect to reach all critical audiences all the time, without sending mixed messages? Given the diversity of audiences, narratives and viewpoints, some of which may be in open conflict with one another, participants wondered whether it was possible to ensure overall message consistency and whether USG capabilities and coordination were up to the challenge.

What is the emergent relationship between IO and PA in COIN/SSTRO/GIE? While IO is meant to "shape" and PA to "inform," the GIE has eradicated the guarantee of an "iron fence" between the two, and may compel new levels of transparency in foreign theaters.

Commander's concerns

This new way of war-fighting expects much of commanders...

Many participants thought that commanders are not receiving sufficient guidance, authority or capabilities in the manner needed to carry out their expanded, information-centric duties. Concerns were voiced across ten issues:

Operating without clear policy guidance. If a commander's operations may incur second and third order informational effects, then he needs a clear understanding of the overall strategic endgame, and the strategic consequences of dealing with "that particular bad guy in this particular way." In the absence of such guidance, commanders create "*strategic policy de facto, through our tactical and operational events.*"

How all-seeing is the commander expected to be? Are higher order informational effects of tactical actions the commander's responsibility?

We are not confident that we have sufficient strategic vision and capability at the brigade level and below to make the right choices.

If I see an information liability or opportunity, do I exercise my own initiative, or should I check back up the chain of command to ensure no unintended second or third order strategic effects? Does that feedback loop exist?

...but limited capabilities compromise results.

How do we aggregate complexity back up the chain of command? Situational complexity in a mosaic war presents huge challenges for message coherence and effective IO, especially given present capabilities.

Is there sufficient capability to sustain agile, 24/7 IO at lower tactical levels? *"The lower levels are greatly challenged by the variety of tasks that they are now responsible for."*

Is there sufficient cultural capability at the tactical level? Most participants thought not.

When security requirements contradict the overall strategic messaging about our objectives in the eyes of the population, what can a commander do? *"The U.S. says, 'we are here to help establish this and reestablish that.' But what the people see you doing is going around clearing out houses, searching ambulances, patting women down at checkpoints, and stuff like that."* Participants were at a loss as to how to conduct necessary security measures in a way that did not alienate the population.

And should U.S. soldiers be put at risk to "send the right message?"

Bringing the boys back home. In the mixed COIN/SSTRO environment, do you take own force risks to "send the right message" (we are here to protect you) to the population? Most commanders are focused on achieving tactical objectives and bringing their troops home safely.

Accepting casualties for IO effects? A senior military commander, stressing the need to be thinking about combat operations for the sake of pursuing information value, asked: *"Are you willing to put someone's life at risk by selecting a mission that will involve physical risk, perhaps the loss of life, for the sake of information? That may sound heretical for a General to say, but I submit to you that the absence of such a view is what often leads us to miss opportunities."*

Introduction

What are the boundaries of Information Operations (IO) when conducting counterinsurgency (COIN) in the midst of stability and reconstruction (SSTRO)? What is the relationship between the political and military elements of the overall information strategy, and who is in charge? How do we counter indigenous insurgents without losing the hearts and minds of the population? Do we have the right capabilities, amassed in the right way? What does it mean to fight for legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the population? If tactical actions can incur strategic informational effects (and losses), what responsibility does this place on the tactical commander? Is the tactical commander responsible for second and third order effects? And if so, are we getting clear strategic vision down to the tactical level? Are we ready to take own force losses to achieve "informational effects"?

> *We are in a war of ideas here. A war for the hearts and minds of the indigenous population.*

These are just some of the questions raised during the U.S. Army War College's December 2005 workshop on "Information Operations and Winning the Peace: Wielding the Information Element of Power in the Global War on Terrorism."

Perhaps more than ever before IO is (or at least should be) the main effort tactically, operationally and strategically in the current phase of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). At the global level, this effort is about winning the "war of ideas." At the theater level, where COIN is being conducted in the midst of SSTRO, the war is for the "hearts and minds" of the population – that is, to attract "the people" so that they willingly support the host nation (and your presence), rather than the insurgents. The COIN/SSTRO fight, therefore, is not just about "ideas," it is about the legitimacy and credibility of your ideas, your presence, and your actions in the eyes of the population.

These new war-winning imperatives – to attract people rather than simply compel adversaries – greatly expand the role of information and perception management, which become primary aspects of the fight. From this perspective, "IO" needs to be considered beyond the doctrinal concept of five core capabilities aligned to influence opposing forces or shape the battlefield. Rather, everything that the military does and says in theater becomes a defacto information operation, given that all actions and words create *informational effects* in the perceptions of the population. In this sense, it is not a matter of "thinking outside the box" of doctrinal IO as you seek to adapt to the asymmetric adversary; rather, it is to realize that you *are* outside that box – that is, your actions are creating informational effects whether you intend them or not. A central challenge, then, is to understand the magnitude of the transformation that is underway

as the U.S. military takes on asymmetrical adversaries in foreign lands, while trying to win the hearts and minds of the foreign population, transform the basis of government and extend the legitimacy of host nations.

This way of fighting is new to the United States and new to the world for that matter. The fundamentally important connections between the war of ideas, diplomatic efforts and military operations in places ranging from Iraq, to Afghanistan, to Bosnia and beyond present unique challenges. U.S. military commanders are expert at conducting kinetic operations. They are less expert at recognizing the inseparable nexus between kinetic action, informational effects and the competition for influence of foreign audiences. And beyond this, today's Global Information Environment (GIE) augments the complexity, by leveling the communication playing field (which empowers the asymmetric adversary), and complicating the messaging picture due to the interconnectedness of different audiences and "real time" media reporting.

The workshop participants and design

The workshop brought together an international group of some 60 IO practitioners from the military, national security and intelligence communities, as well as Middle East subject matter experts (SMEs), for two and a half days of intensive dialogue and debate on the changing role of IO and informational effects in COIN/SSTRO. The discussions were rich and varied, underscoring the mix of services represented, their different and evolving perspectives of IO doctrine, as well as the diversity of views currently held across DOD and the other agencies. Participants also brought different experiences: some had served in current theaters of operation, in the Balkans, in Africa or in other capacities in the Middle East, Europe and Asia.

To spark debate, the workshop used case studies drawn from the Israeli-Palestinian experience (the second Intifada phase) as a "jumping off" point for discussion of IO intentions and effects at the tactical, operational and strategic levels (for workshop methodology, see Appendix A). The Israeli-Palestinian proxy allowed for a freer debate of key issues, and avoided putting participants in the position of having to discuss specific U.S.-led operations or the more political aspects of current U.S. policy in Iraq and Afghanistan. (See Box 1 on page 13.)

The retrospective case studies allowed participants to explore how the intent of Israeli IO to counter insurgents actually played out. The focus, therefore, was on the overall "informational effects" of Israeli messages and shaping actions (kinetic and informational) – both the intended effects and the unintended consequences. This perspective helped participants step outside the more narrow confines of military IO doctrine to consider the bigger picture, and also helped illuminate the potential negative informational effects of kinetic action, such that physical wins become strategic losses. In all, the case study discussions yielded 13 "takeaways" with general significance for thinking about the central importance of the informational dimension of power in COIN, and given the added challenges of the GIE. These takeaways, along with the case study background materials, are gathered together in Appendices B and C of this report.[1]

1. Individual takeaways also appear as text boxes throughout the report.

But workshop discussions were not bound to the Israeli-Palestinian context; rather, participants built out from the case studies to raise issues that they were facing themselves, that is, issues of core concern to the U.S. military and coalition members. And it is these issues that form the bulk of this report. The debates were vigorous, and sometimes troubled, reflecting the wider state of flux within U.S. policy, as the military struggles to process the momentous learning acquired in the field over the past five years, and to adapt its doctrine, policies and organization accordingly. The exchanges also reflected the mix of participants, which kept returning the focus to the overarching level of informational effects and how to wield informational power to achieve the overall desired end-state.

This report synthesizes the key themes and rich exchanges that emerged from across the workshop sessions. It is structured to reflect the main clusters of issues and concerns expressed by the participants, and is organized in four parts with three appendices:

Part One outlines twelve "framing observations" about the new primacy of the informational aspects of power within the COIN/SSTRO environment. The observations cluster around three key themes: the leveled playing field of the new GIE, which empowers asymmetrical adversaries; the changed nature of the battlespace in COIN/SSTRO, which has important implications for war-winning; and, the challenges of mounting an effective response, where creating and managing informational effects becomes key.

Part Two elaborates participants' views on the specific nature of the COIN/SSTRO battlespace, with its emphasis on "the people" as the center of gravity, and its new information-centric, all-of-government imperatives.

Part Three focuses on the challenge of response in COIN/SSTRO, namely, what it means to "win the hearts and minds of the population" and how the military is implicated in this fight. The main contest is over perceived legitimacy and credibility – that of the intervening power and host nation versus that of the insurgency – in the eyes of the population. Part 3 synthesizes participant exchanges about the different factors that affect local perceptions of legitimacy and credibility, and in so doing helps to illuminate the primacy of informational effects in COIN/SSTRO.

Part Four summarizes the enduring challenges identified by workshop participants – both the larger policy/organizational issues, as well as challenges faced by the commander in the field who is struggling to rapidly adapt to emerging COIN/SSTRO and IO challenges, even as official doctrine and organizational backing lag behind.

Appendix A outlines the workshop methodology.

Appendix B presents the case study materials that formed the backdrop to workshop discussions.

Appendix C gathers together the case study "takeaways" synthesized from across the different working groups.

Readers should note that this report is organized in modular format: individual sections are more-or less stand alone. Those who prefer a parsimonious read could focus on Parts 1 and 4, while those who want more depth and texture should embrace the entire

report. The case study "takeaways" are positioned as boxes throughout the main body of the text, adding grounded insight and examples to the more general and/or U.S.-centric issues and concerns that are the focus of this report.

The workshop was held under the "Chatham House Rule" and thus the report does not attribute individual or institutional comments, although participant quotations are used throughout to give a flavor of the exchanges and perspectives.[2]

2. See, www.chathamhouse.org.uk/index.php?id=14

Box 1. Workshop design: Why the Israeli-Palestinian case study?

Case studies were used to explore certain of Israel's attempts to deal with the growing violence of Palestinian resistance and terror tactics during the second Intifada. The three case studies focused on the operational campaign level (Operation Defensive Shield), the tactical level (The Battle of Jenin) and the strategic level (the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip).

The Israeli-Palestinian context was chosen for two reasons. First, as a proxy case for thinking about Iraq and Afghanistan, the case study approach freed up participant discussion and encouraged out of the box reflections and learning. Second, the Israeli experience has certain significant parallels with current operations in Iraq, although it also has significant differences.

Relevance of the case studies to U.S. concerns

There are four ways in which the Israeli situation and case studies are relevant to the current U.S. situation:

1. **Both the U.S. and Israel are engaged against asymmetrical adversaries that also employ terror tactics.** U.S. and DOD policy identify Israel as a country threatened by "global terrorism."[1]

2. **Israel has a long history in conducting counterinsurgency operations and has adapted methods to do so.** The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) engaged in decades of counterinsurgency operations against the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Hezbollah in South Lebanon, and more recently in the West Bank and Gaza. Many consider the IDF to have valuable expertise to share with respect to countering insurgents, although some of the approaches – such as military occupation, targeted assassinations, widespread use of administrative detention, collective punishment and the closure of civilian population centers – are considered controversial.

3. **Some observers think that the U.S. and Israel share considerable similarities in their respective Contemporary Operational Environments (COE) and challenges of "transformation."** A 2002 study concluded that the IDF's battle with asymmetric opponents – who employ indirect methods and define success by continued resistance rather than military victory – is similar to the situation faced by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Likewise, the IDF's own force "transformation" in the past six years shares similarities with DOD's "Transformation Roadmap", including its focus on developing a competence in IO.[2]

4. **The U.S. military's relationship has grown closer with the IDF in recent years and IDF tactical innovations have been studied and adopted by U.S. planners.**

Points of Departure: COIN, but not SSTRO

The case studies were chosen from within a time period when Israel was pursuing COIN against Palestinian adversaries. But, and significantly, the Israelis were not involved in stability and reconstruction operations with the Palestinians (although other, non-military actors of the international community were engaged in humanitarian, development and reconstruction activities). Rather, the Israeli approach at this particular point in time was very much one of a military re-occupation with the goal of eradicating the "infrastructure of terror," and deterring future terrorist attacks. From the perspective of the workshop, this means that the Israelis were not in the business of winning hearts and minds, or building towards an endstate that was considered legitimate in the eyes of the Palestinian population. They were not doing COIN in the midst of SSTRO. Still, the COIN-only focus of the case studies did throw up important takeaways with implications for SSTRO, as the workshop report details.

1. See, Caslen (2006).
2. See, Creed (2002).

Part 1. Winning the peace in COIN/SSTRO: Twelve framing observations

Across all workshop discussions, participants wrestled with understanding the new primacy of the informational aspects of power and its implications for "winning the peace" in a mixed COIN/SSTRO theater, which requires combatting an insurgency *without* losing the hearts and minds of the population, while simultaneously effecting security and facilitating the development of legitimate and functioning governing institutions and mechanisms. A synthesis of workshop discussions yielded 12 interrelated "framing observations" that clustered around three key themes: the challenges introduced by the "leveled playing field" of the new GIE, which empowers adversaries and precludes domination of the information sphere; the changed nature of the battlespace in COIN/SSTRO, which renders the informational dimension of the fight as primary; and, the challenges for mounting an effective response, where managing informational effects is key. These framing observations do not reflect a formal consensus among workshop participants, nor do they claim to be comprehensive; however, they do capture some of the recurring drumbeats of the discussion.

The Global Information Environment: The leveled playing field

1. **No single actor can control the information sphere.** The interconnected reality of the GIE means that the informational dimension of war-fighting has taken on new importance, even as the ability to dominate the information sphere has decreased. In today's wired world, no actor – not even a regional or global military superpower – can control the informational sphere. As one participant observed: "There are a lot in D.C. right now talking in the QDR [Quadrenial Defense Review] about 'information dominance.' I think we need to dispel that concept. You can't control or own the information environment. It is an open environment, and other messages can always get out. We need to start thinking about how we plug information into that environment so that our information somehow rises to the top." New technologies, in particular the multi-media capabilities of the Internet, are readily accessible to a multitude of would-be "information producers," enabling almost anyone to conduct low tech yet sophisticated "information operations" with a global reach: "All you need is a $150 worth of technology, the determination to become a player, and a message that is legitimate and credible to a target audience." The GIE's implications for how IO is planned and conducted in the COIN/SSTRO battlespace surfaced as a cross-cutting theme throughout the workshop.

> *I think we need to dispel the concept of achieving 'information dominance.'*

The shifting battlespace of COIN/SSTRO: The info-centric war

2. **In COIN, the center of gravity (COG) is the population, not the insurgent.** An insurgency requires the support or acquiescence of the local population for all forms of intelligence and logistical support, from food and supplies through to movement and protection. This support is often readily given when the insurgency is native, and claiming to be "fighting for the people." A counterinsurgent will not prevail over the insurgency without winning the assistance and backing of the local population. This view was emphasized by participating U.S. senior military commanders:

   The center of gravity must be explicitly and unambiguously stated in order to identify the main effort. In Afghanistan, the "Afghan people" are the stated COG. The main effort is to win their hearts and minds.

   [The center of gravity] is the indigenous population over which the insurgent and counterinsurgent are fighting.

3. **The primary objective is to attract and keep the people on your side.** The fight is for the "hearts and minds" of the indigenous population, and the "win" is achieved when the population supports you and the host nation rather than the insurgents. But this support must be given willingly, if the objectives of stability and reconstruction are also to be achieved. (See Observations 9 and 10 on pages 18 and 19.)

4. **The main "fire" is informational: In COIN/SSTRO the focus is more on discrediting the insurgent's strategy and means in the eyes of the population than on taking out the insurgent kinetically.** Insurgents are often the brothers and cousins of the population you are trying to influence. Taking them out will not win hearts and minds, but may well fuel future recruits. The "win" must be based on convincing the people (and the insurgents where possible) that your way is the better way, and your ends are the better ends, which also requires that the insurgent's ways and means are discredited. As a senior military commander underlined: "The use of the information element of power is primary…and the focus becomes more on strategic effects than on tactical combat." At the same time, "your way" will only have traction if it is seen by the people to resonate with their own needs, desires and goals.

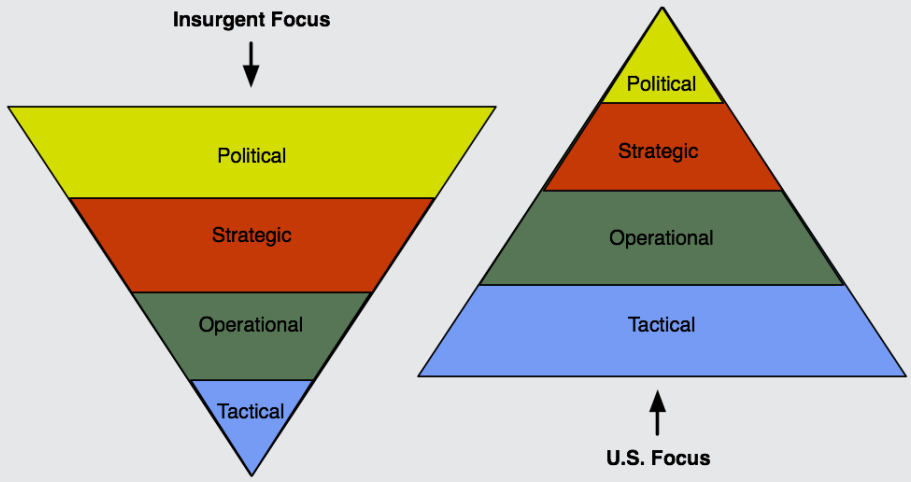
5. **The insurgent's advantage: They understand that the fight is for the loyalty and support of their people, and their principle "fires" *are* informational and political. That is how they are organized to fight.** In the asymmetric war, insurgents cannot prevail using conventional means, and they do not try. Rather, insurgents use kinetic actions to achieve informational and political effects within the population, for example: to win adherents by undertaking daring physical acts to 'defend the people against the invading Goliath;' or, to terrify the supporters ('collaborators') of the liberating ('occupying') forces, and to undermine the peace and security promised by SSTRO. Moreover, insurgents capitalize on conventional kinetic actions undertaken by U.S. and other militaries by spinning the subsequent information effects to their own advantage. Their ability to do this

is enhanced because, often, military planners do not address sufficiently the informational "prequel" and "sequel" to kinetic actions, that is, to explain the rationale for action, to reassure the population, and to manage the after-action "informational effects." This neglect can be either intentional, to preserve operational security or effect military deception, or a consequence of time pressures when planning complex joint operations. And yet, the before- and after-action informational void presents an important opportunity to the insurgent, who can dominate the resulting information gap with stories of heroic martyrs or civilian casualties, which often resonate deeply with the existing cultural and resistance narratives of their own native target audience, and undermine the legitimacy of the physical action. (See Box 2, below, and Box 3 on page 19.)

> *When dealing with an asymmetrical combatant encounter, there is always an informational sequel to the physical action.'*

6. **The U.S. disadvantage: An outdated COIN doctrine,[3] with IO focused more on supporting tactical physical wins, than on creating strategic informational effects.** The U.S. administration and military are not yet organized or resourced to seriously fight the information-centric war in foreign lands. The U.S. channels wartime efforts and resources toward the tactical, physical level of war. But turning this traditional emphasis on its head (i.e., the insurgent's view of war) makes the informational element of power primary (See Observation 4.) As a senior military commander stated: "In stability operations, the essence of an operation is information centric. We still see it physically and kinetically centric, and we think about information as a supplement to that action. But in stability operations,

Box 2. The U.S. and insurgents view the war from different perspectives.



3. The workshop was held prior to the release of the February 2006 draft COIN doctrine, which addresses many of these issues.

your tactical work should be information-centric." This has huge implications for how operations are conducted, how targets are chosen, and how informational capabilities are marshaled. (See Boxes 2 and 3.)

7. **The military cannot go it alone: All dimensions of national power must be leveraged and coordinated in COIN/SSTRO.** The informational effects perspective in COIN/SSTRO blurs the boundaries between the tactical and strategic levels of war, and requires the coordination of all dimensions of national power – diplomatic, informational, military and economic (DIME) – to achieve the desired informational effects and end-state. The melding of tactical and strategic levels from an informational effects perspective demands an integrated and coordinated information strategy across the military and political spectrum. As one participant noted, in COIN/SSTRO, "The levels of war are more like intersecting circles. The operational circle is in the middle, the strategic is on top, and tactical on the bottom, but they all overlap. And sometimes you may be only in one or two circles, but we actually tend to be in all three at once." And as another participant added: "These circles are actually shrinking in on each other and the opportunity to be fairly tactical or fairly strategic with operations is getting smaller and smaller. When we think about this from an IO perspective, we need to figure out how to choreograph this information picture instead of having a fight between our different communities about who transmits what at what time." (See next point.)

8. **An effective and coordinated information strategy requires a clearly defined end-state, comprehensively understood.** As one participant summarized: "The most important thing for developing an information strategy is to define what winning means. What does winning mean in Iraq? You have to start with that question." National policy and the information strategy flow from the answer to that question, with implications for what is communicated to domestic audiences, to allies, to opponents and to the foreign indigenous population. An added complication, however, is that the defined end-state must resonate with the interests and desires of the indigenous population, if you are to have legitimacy and credibility. And this has major implications for when, how, and with whom the parameters of the end-state are determined. (See Observations 9-12.)

The challenge of response: Legitimacy and the primacy of "informational effects"

9. **The core challenge of COIN in SSTRO: To convince the people (the COG in COIN) that your presence, agenda and local allies offer a more legitimate and credible future than do the insurgents.** Stability and reconstruction requires the population to believe that both your presence and your agenda are more legitimate and credible than those of the insurgency, and that you can guarantee their security. The very fact that an insurgency exists means that "something has already gone wrong,"[4] that is, your legitimacy and credibility with certain groups is lacking. If you can get and keep the people on your side, you will win the peace.

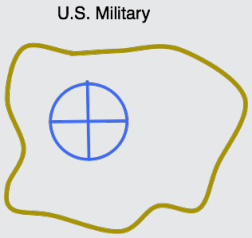
4. See, Cordesman (2006).

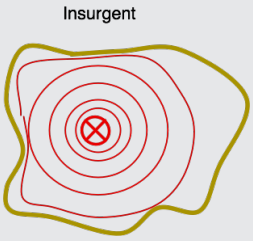
10. **The primacy of informational effects: If the fight is primarily about how the population views your legitimacy and credibility, everything you do and everything you say affects that perception.** Your legitimacy and credibility are based on how the indigenous population views your motives (for why you are there), what you haveve promised to achieve, how coherently and consistently you deliver these goods through your actions, and whether or not what you are offering resonates with their own needs, desires and goals. This means that all your actions – from the theater level through to the "three-block war," from the targets you attack through to your soldiers' interactions with people on the street – and everything that you say, anywhere (in this new global information environment), create informational effects that either reinforce or damage your legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the population. (See also Observation 4.)

Box 3. The stone and the ripples: U.S. versus insurgent view of the battlespace

Participants concurred that although the U.S. military has been rapidly adapting to the information-centric battlespace, its organization and training are still weighted towards conducting physical action to achieve the desired effects. By contrast, insurgents conduct physical action mostly to achieve strategic informational effects. Borrowing and building on the "stone in a lake" metaphor developed by Emery et al. (2005),** we can see the relationship as follows: When you throw a stone into a lake, that physical action causes ripples across the water; the ripples are the residual informational effects of the physical act. As Emery argues, "long after the stone has hit bottom, the residual effects of the act carry on in all directions and are difficult to interdict, ultimately crashing into the banks of the lake."

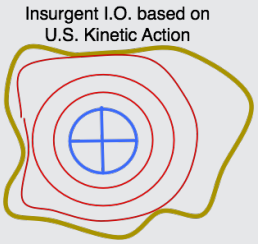
U.S.: focus on the stone. As Emery notes: "The current non-state conflict strategy focuses on the splash of the stone – the physical effects – and not enough on affecting the ripple – the informational effects – before it reaches the bank." That is, before it has an impact on the perceptions of the population. The U.S. military tends to be focused on the stone.





Insurgents: focus on the ripples. By contrast, insurgents use physical action to leverage the informational effects – be that to attract recruits through the "bravery" of their actions, or to spread a sense of fear and insecurity within the population. The insurgent focus is the informational ripples, not the stone.

Insurgents also leverage the ripples of the U.S. stone. Insurgents also seek to leverage the informational effects of U.S. kinetic actions. When the U.S. throws a stone, the insurgents are busy spinning the informational ripples – "see the civilians killed by the occupier?" The insurgent's spin is more powerful when there is no counter-message, that is, when the U.S. ignores the informational sequel to its physical acts.



** Reference: Emery, N., Mowles Jr, D.G., and Werchan, J. (2005) *Information Operations Doctrine and Non-state Conflict: Shaping the Information Environment to Fight Terrorism and Insurgencies*. IO Sphere. Spring: 5-11.

11. **The imperative of message resonance: In COIN/SSTRO, "message dominance" is determined not by its pervasive presence, but by its resonance with the indigenous population.** You can saturate the local information channels with messages about your purpose and "good works" on behalf of the population, but if your message doesn't make sense to the local population – addressing their hopes and fears, and expressed in their terms – it won't resonate. If it doesn't resonate, it won't stick.

> *In stability operations, everything you do has an informational effect.*

12. **The need for message consistency and coherence: All plans, actions and IO campaigns need to be considered from an overall strategic informational effects perspective,** that is, their informational effects on the population's perceptual environment, and subsequent perceptions, behaviors and allegiances. Messages (including actions) need to be consistent and coherent across all USG actors, or information fratricide may result. (See also Observations 7 and 8.)

These framing observations are unpacked in the remainder of this report, which looks in more detail at what participants had to say about the changed dimensions of the battlespace (Part 2), the challenge of response (Part 3), and the enduring challenges and dilemmas for which there are, as of yet, no easy solutions (Part 4).

Part 2. The shifting battlespace

Given the context of COIN/SSTRO, IO and desired informational effects are less about compelling adversaries or shaping the battlefield and more about countering an adversary while trying to win the hearts and minds of the people who support, acquiesce and/or are related to that adversary. As noted in Part 1, the "center of gravity" in COIN/SSTRO is "the people" whom you need to attract and keep on your side in order to counter the insurgency, extend the legitimacy of the host nation, and build towards a stable and self-functioning government and country. This new imperative has important implications for how one understands the COIN/SSTRO battlespace, and the "non-conventional" and comprehensive ways and means that are required. Building outwards from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies, participants debated different aspects of the COIN/SSTRO battlespace and its new information-centric, all-of-government requirements. The discussions clustered around four key themes:

1. **The downside of kinetic action:** Why direct kinetic action as a means to deter and/or defeat insurgents is problematic from an SSTRO perspective;
2. **The new importance of informational "fire":** Why information-led approaches that seek to discredit the insurgency's violent strategy and means in the eyes of its supporters are more appropriate, given desired SSTRO ends;
3. **The new importance of addressing motivations:** The importance of addressing the motivations that energize an insurgency and give it legitimacy kicks the problem up to the political level, but also has implications for the military on the ground; and,
4. **The need to leverage DIME:** Why all forms of national power must be effectively coordinated to win the peace (diplomatic, information, military and economic, i.e. DIME).

These themes are unpacked below, with a particular focus on the role of informational effects.

1. The downside of kinetic action: Why not focus on taking out the insurgent?

Participants accepted that the policy of targeting insurgents for physical destruction is based on a belief that such action will eliminate known trouble-makers, deter future recruits, and will thereby effect security, which is the primary requisite for SSTRO. However, discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian case studies suggested that this belief can be misguided – a mostly kinetic approach to hunting down Palestinian targets appears to have further fueled and radicalized the resistance movements, rather than stamping them out. Most participants concurred that ending an insurgency is not going to be achieved by a single-minded policy of capturing or killing the adversary. Moreover, a kinetic-heavy approach can cause added complications with respect to SSTRO objectives. Participants discussed five reasons why this was the case:

Blood ties. Indigenous insurgents are usually tightly networked into the population – my father, my brother, my cousin – and they may also be providing vital services to the community and their followers (health services, schools, welfare). Therefore, a strategy that targets just the insurgent and seeks to portray him as undesirable is unlikely to resonate very widely with the surrounding population, that is, with the population that you are trying to "win over." Moreover, once a cycle of killing starts, "blood feuds," revenge killings and other traditional systems of honor can perpetuate and widen the legitimacy for insurgency, quite independent of its original sources.

Shared grievances. Shared grievances are a powerful motivator of resistance. An insurgent who claims to represent communal or national grievances may well command a legitimate popular following. If those grievances remain unaddressed, taking out the insurgent will not end the resistance. Rather, as the Israeli case study suggests, a kinetic approach can serve to both strengthen and radicalize resistance movements, while drawing them closer to the population. (See Box 4 on page 24.)

Shifting sands: Today's insurgent may be tomorrow's political ally. Labeling certain groups or individuals as "terrorist" and therefore irredeemably "evil" can close down future opportunities for political engagement and settlement. As one participant noted: "There needs to be a recognition that a conflict situation is fluid, and that the stakes and stakeholders can change in the course of events. There can also be political evolution. So it is critical not to rule out certain players." (See Box 4.) As an SME noted, former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin (elected 1977), was a leader of the Jewish underground during the time of the British Mandate in Palestine and ordered a number of terrorist attacks (such as the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel) to protest British policies and drive the British out. At that time, Begin was on the U.K.'s "most wanted" terrorist list.

> *How can you kill every terrorist?*
>
> *We would be ill advised to try to discredit these people. What we should be doing is dicrediting their mechanisms or means.*
>
> *Ultimately some of those insurgents will be part of the future. So your message needs to be clear: 'I'm not targeting you, I'm targeting what you are doing. And if you turn from that, then you can be part of the solution in the future.'*

In COIN/SSTRO, rules of engagement (ROE) should be considered in light of the importance of establishing the "rule of law." An SME reflected on the Israeli policies of "targeted killing" and administrative detention of terrorist and insurgent suspects without trial or evidence. The IDF justifies these actions under its ROE and considers them to be a legitimate response to the threat of Palestinian terrorism. However, these actions are considered illegitimate (and outside the "rule of law" given that suspects are never tried, nor public evidence reviewed) by the majority of Palestinians who see them as unfair and hypocritical, especially as the Israelis insist

the Palestinians, themselves, must adhere to the "rule of law" in order for negotiations to proceed. Broadening this argument out to the current SSTRO theaters where the U.S. and its coalition partners are engaged, participants concurred that reinforcing security through the reestablishment and reinforcement of the "rule of law" and its attendant institutions is a major priority under SSTRO. An international participant commented that the present-day U.S. situation, where the ROE remain oriented to the priorities of major combat operations, may warrant a re-think given SSTRO's "rule of law" objectives. (See Box 4.)

What about the wackos? Can you discriminate between "thugs" and "resistance"? While accepting that many groups of indigenous insurgents may represent legitimate complaints, participants noted that there are also "thugs and mugs that you have to deal with, who don't have a political aim, who seem to enjoy killing for the sake of killing…You can't say that they are all good guys with legitimate issues." The idea here was that some of these guys just need to be taken down with force. While participants agreed that "we have to be able to discriminate between different types of insurgents," the workshop discussions also revealed how hard it can be to accept that a group attacking <u>you</u> has a legitimate agenda. Thus, while many participants concurred that Hamas, regardless of its tactics, did have a popular following based on its resistance agenda, some were less able to see that some of the insurgents in Iraq may also have legitimate, homegrown issues: "There is a real distinction between the insurgency in Iraq and the Hamas insurgency…The insurgency in Iraq seems bent upon terror. That is their goal, that is their end, to terrorize until America leaves." And yet other participants suggested that at least some of the Iraqi insurgents had deeper issues: "Part of it is a struggle by the former Sunni 'haves' who, although a minority, were privileged under the Saddam regime. And now, as a minority, they are just castaways in their own environment. So whereas you may have some terrorists doing things for terrorism's sake only, this resonates with the people who are trying to regain their position of authority that they had before we arrived." The discussion underscored the complexity of assessing who is "legitimate" and who is not in a foreign, asymmetric battlespace.

2. The new importance of informational "fire": Discrediting the insurgent's strategy and actions

A senior military commander observed that a central focus in COIN is to discredit the insurgent's strategy and actions, and that this fight was information-led: "Tactical action is really about convincing the indigenous citizenry that the insurgent's strategy and actions are discredited…It is about gathering information and evidence to fight the informational fight for the hearts and minds of the population…The information component is primary, not secondary."

One participant cited a compelling Iraqi example of how insurgents discredited their own strategy when they started bombing indigenous targets: "When the insurgents were bombing and killing the coalition down the street, the people didn't really pay much attention. But once they started to feel it personally, like when the insurgents bombed a local's store and killed his neighbors, then it became a means that they

Box 4. "Victory" in the asymmetric battlespace: Takeaways from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies

Eliminating insurgents and/or insurgent leaders won't stop the resistance, or the terror tactics, and may fuel further radicalization (Operation Defensive Shield and Battle of Jenin)

While capturing or killing insurgent leaders and/or lower level militants may be intended to eliminate known trouble-makers, disrupt command and control, and send a message of "deterrence" to future would-be leaders or followers, these are not necessarily the informational effects that are created. When an insurgency commands a popular following for a political cause (like Palestinian groups and some of the insurgents in Iraq) degradation of insurgent capabilities and/or killing militants may not have a deterrent effect. Rather, the kinetic encounter can create its own informational effects, which can feed the resistance narrative of the "martyrs", spark calls for revenge, and thereby strengthen the insurgent's appeal, especially if there has been collateral damage, which brings the people closer to the insurgents. The result is new leaders and recruits who inevitably step up, and who are often more radical than their predecessors. This kinetic-informational dynamic renders an eventual political settlement more difficult. The Israeli case studies revealed three examples of this:

***The Battle of Jenin*:** The Israeli intent was to stop the wave of terrorist attacks emanating from Jenin by apprehending or eliminating suspected terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp, dismantling the "infrastructure of terror" and deterring future terrorists by sending the message to Palestinian audiences that "we are not afraid to go into the refugee camps. We will get you wherever you are." The Israelis backed up their IO message with a credible tactical plan of action that drove the Palestinian militants into the refugee camp, and ensured they were captured or killed there (some 58 Palestinians were killed, although half were thought to be civilians). In terms of effects, however, the "deterrent" message to the Palestinian militants, and the local population that supported or acquiesced to them, was drowned out by three factors, which turned the Information War to the advantage of the Palestinian resistance fighters. First, the relatively large number of IDF casualties (23 killed, including 13 in a single ambush) served to confirm the "heroic resistance" of the outgunned Palestinian fighters (in their own eyes) because they managed to hold off the full armored might of the IDF for 10 days. Second, both the civilian casualties, as well as the physical destruction of large parts of the refugee camp (which the Israelis undertook with bulldozers for tactical purposes) served to reinforce the idea of the immoral and illegitimate Israeli oppressor in the eyes of the Palestinian street. Third, Jenin itself has strong symbolic resonance in the cultural history of the Palestinians – as a city with a long history of resistance to foreign occupiers, and the birthplace of the 1930s Islamic resistance leader Izzidin al-Qassam, from whom the current Islamist Izzidin al-Qassam Brigades have taken their name. These informational effects worked to turn the Battle of Jenin into a symbolic victory for the Palestinian fighters, and especially, the members of the Islamic resistance, as the story of Jenin 2003 became incorporated into Palestinian nationalist and resistance narratives. The strategic outcome, therefore, was neither to cease the flow of recruits to these organizations, nor to put an end to suicide bombings inside Israel. In the three years after the operation, the militant attacks of all resistance groups targeted in Jenin continued.

Operation Defensive Shield and the further rise of Hamas: The IDF used kinetics to degrade terrorist infrastructure, including the dismantling of the Palestinian National Authority's (PNA) security apparatus, and to capture or kill suspected terrorist group members. Part of the IO "intent" was to isolate and humiliate Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in his headquarters to "punish" the PNA for its alleged support of terrorist incidents. But the resulting informational effects was the further hollowing out of the political authority of the PNA in the eyes of the people, which gave further legitimacy to the more radical Islamic oppositional group Hamas, as well as their strategy of violent resistance.

Targeted killings of suspected terrorist/political leaders of Hamas: Some of Hamas' popular political leaders that were assassinated (such as Ismail Abu Shanab) had previously signaled a willingness for political compromise and accommodation with Israel. By eliminating these leaders, the IDF eliminated potential negotiating partners, while also further radicalizing the militant groups, who undertook further suicide bombings and attacks to avenge the deaths. The strategic shortsightedness of the policy of targeted killings became more apparent when the center of gravity for Palestinian politics shifted to Hamas as the democratically-elected government. As a participant noted: "*The Israelis killed off a lot of the opinion leaders in Hamas. That may work in the short-term but its not going to work in the longer-term. You have to engage those guys.*" Overall, participants concurred that "*Israel's success in applying these kinds of kinetic means for dealing with terrorist activities has actually been rather unsuccessful.*"

did not support. They may still be undecided on the ultimate objective, but they no longer support those means." In this case, the insurgent's strategy worked to discredit itself.

If you, as an outsider, want to help this process along, it is critical to ensure that your information campaign is not based on why *you* think these actions are illegitimate (i.e., 'they are against the law of war'), but rather on why *the population* might think they are illegitimate. That is, the information campaign must work to challenge the legitimacy and credibility of what the insurgent says he is doing in the eyes of the population, and in a way that resonates with local, embedded cultural and resistance narratives: "It must be done in a way that resonates culturally, so the population comes to this conclusion themselves, and do not feel that you are proselytizing them against their own people." The information strategy, therefore, requires close cultural understanding of "what is sensitive to the adversary."

It's not necessarily the insurgent, the individual, that you focus on, but what the insurgents are doing – their means to accomplish their ends. That's what you are really going after.

Some insurgents cloak themselves in a noble cause, but their objective is more about power and control. As information warriors, we have to expose the facade.

We need to understand what is sensitive to our adversary, and work that to discredit their means.

For example, as a senior military commander noted, the insurgents may wrap themselves in a narrative of bravery and defense of the population. One possible way to delegitimize that narrative is to get photographic evidence of insurgents hiding behind women as they are shooting: "You put out a counter-argument, and back it up with pictures that show them hiding behind the women." As the commander continued: "In stability operations or in a counterinsurgency type of operation, we might think about using 'indirect fire sensors' to confirm the location where someone has done something against the will of the people – not so that we can return physical fire in kind, but so that we can quickly use informational fire as an asymmetrical approach to their physical fire. It is not about what they shot and what they hit; it is about from where they shot, and how they shot. Documenting what the enemy is doing [when it stands in contradiction to what they say they are doing, or what they say they are standing for] then becomes powerful ammunition in this information war."

The commander concluded that in COIN you should be seeking to document this kind of evidence as a main effort: "So if in COIN your real obligation and tactical action is information centric, not physical centric, then you should be looking for those types of images all the time. Your intelligence collection plan for imagery, for example, is not to find the best avenue of approach, but to document evidence that the fighter is hiding behind women."

Another participant suggested that it might be effective to document and "message" how insurgent activities were costing the population in economic and political terms: "This bomb led to x-number killed, and this area being shut down causing merchants to lose x-amount of dollars, and requiring x-amount of dollars to rebuild." As the participant continued: "There are great and long-standing hassles that result from these attacks. If you get the details out to the people about how much they are costing, it may swing public support away." Other participants, however, thought that such information may not really make a difference if the overall cause of the insurgents is perceived as legitimate (with no acceptable alternatives). Another participant thought it might play to the insurgent's advantage: "I wonder if providing all that detail may not give the terrorists a very measurable indicator of how effective their attack was. I think you have to be very careful." A related discussion, drawing on the Israeli-Palestinian case, raised the idea of "making the consequences of suicide bombings so unbearable to the community [by way of collective punishment] that the locals themselves begin to condemn it, and start looking for other means to achieve their political ends." The probability of these effects, however, is again linked to the perceived legitimacy of the cause and whether or not a viable political track is there as an alternative to violence. An SME noted that Israel's policy of collective punishment has not acted as a deterrent to resistance activities and suicide bombers. Rather, they have tended to create more support for the resistance, as the population sees Israeli bulldozers taking down homes, and IDF soldiers imposing curfews.

Overall, participants concurred that the work of leveraging documentation and information to discredit the insurgent's strategy and approach requires deep cultural, historical and situational knowledge and can be extremely difficult to undertake effectively. (See Box 5.) We return to the "capability" issues in Part 3 of the report (Challenge of legitimacy).

3. The new importance of addressing motivations

Throughout the workshop sessions, discussions of how to end an indigenous insurgency (with a popular or acquiescent following) kept coming back to the issue of motivations. (See Box 6 on page 29.) Participants concurred that addressing the problem at this level was not a military issue, but a political issue, requiring the population to become stakeholders in an acceptable political solution to their grievances. If the political track is seen to be both legitimate and going somewhere, then insurgents who chose violent means to disrupt the process are much easier to discredit and ostracize by the population's own political leaders. This kicked the discussion up to the interagency level, and the role of DIME in SSTRO, which is covered briefly in the next section. However, if an acceptable political track is not there, then the population may see that there is no legitimate alternative to resistance, and the military's task of "discrediting the insurgent's means" becomes challenging indeed. (See Box 5.) Worse, the military itself will be seen as lacking legitimacy, and the fight for hearts and minds will be a non-starter. The discussions threw up five potential roles for the military in addressing "motivations," given that it is the force on the ground in COIN/SSTRO:

Ensure the safety and security of the population, which can help to win over those who acquiesce to the insurgency out of fear, or whose support for insurgent methods is wavering. In a COIN/SSTRO environment, preserving public safety is as important as is it difficult, given that insurgents engage in kinetic action for the residual informational effects of creating insecurity, and keeping any potential dissenters in line. In such an environment, can the military really "guarantee" anyone's security? As a senior military commander noted: "The degree of threat on lives [made by insurgents] can be a much more compelling argument than the one that we will make… We can try to convince them that their lives will benefit if they work with us. But at what point is someone willing to expose themselves and their family? This is a very complex dynamic." (See Box 3, and also Box 6 on page 29.)

> *"You've got to cut off the stream of motivation.*

Box 5. Cultural awareness: Discrediting insurgent action requires expert knowledge.

While participants accepted that delegitimizing the insurgent's means in the eyes of the population was key, there was some discussion about the cultural capability needed to actually achieve this effect. Participants identified two key challenges:

Can you marshal evidence that is credible? Some participants argued that documenting pictures of fighters shooting from behind a minaret, or insurgents using ambulances to carry weapons, could be used to discredit the insurgent's moral standing in the eyes of the population, or help the population to accept the legitimacy of U.S. return fire at the mosque or the searching of ambulances. However, others argued that, in an atmosphere of mistrust, even photographic evidence can be seen as suspect: *"Even if we had photos or videos of [insurgents] firing from the mosques and using Red Crescent ambulances for moving arms, and we broadcast those images to the Palestinians and the greater Islamic world, it wouldn't play at all. They would argue that the photos were staged. That they were done in a studio or something. It would play to a Western world. But not to an Islamic audience."*

Messages may be understood differently than intended: For example, fighters shooting from behind a minaret may actually be seen – literally – as the "defenders of the faith" in the eyes of the population, and U.S. damage to the mosque by way of return fire could be seen as the "true motive" of the Christian occupier (not as legitimate return fire, as might be expected in the law of war). Imagine, for example, that the U.S. has been taken over by Muslim "liberators," and the folks in Fort Worth gather in the local Baptist Church to wage a last stand. Would the pastors of America stand up to say this was wrong? Similarly, documenting the insurgent's abuse of ambulances can play out as *"they are the weaker party; they have no choice but to adopt tactics like that,"* whereas the occupying power's response – stopping and searching all ambulances, which may result in the deaths of injured civilian occupants – is seen as the brutality of the immoral occupier, rather than as a necessary counter-tactic.

Common to both challenges is the underlying factor that insurgents may represent (or claim to represent) legitimate grievances in the eyes of the population. If so, then the actions that they undertake to "resist" and fight for those grievances may have a fair deal of acceptance by the population, as well as external sympathizers. This increases the challenge of finding appropriate ways and means to effectively discredit them.

Document evidence that discredits the insurgent's strategy and actions in the eyes of the local population. (See discussion in Section 2, pages 23-26.)

Ensure own solider actions do not alienate the population and/or increase their motivation to support the insurgents. Soldiers are the main point of contact with the population, and their behavior – good or bad, respectful or humiliating – exerts enormous effect on the population's understanding of what your true intentions must be ("you are here to help me" or "you are here to humiliate and conquer"). This discussion is picked up again in Part 3.

Be the "hammer in reserve." One participant suggested that "if you go strictly for the positive [engagement] side, then hard-nosed elements on the other side will view you as incompetent or weak, and take advantage of that. It is essential to strike a balance – having negative reinforcement for the hard-nosed parts of society, while bringing along the others with positive inducements." Another noted that the "hammer" must be leveraged for its informational effects: "If everyone knows you've got the hammer in reserve, it is important that when a situation happens you deal with it in a mature manner so you are not dropping that hammer every time a minor offense occurs. And in that way, you may build a little more credibility with the people you are trying to reach. It's a pebble at a time; an incremental process. It is dangerous to look for a silver bullet here."

Play a role in keeping the channels of communication open. As the on-the-ground presence, the military can play a role in keeping the channels of communication open with the insurgents and population that supports them – not for negotiation (which is obviously not the military's preserve), but as a channel for dialogue and signaling. As one participant noted: "Even if you have to dance with the devil occasionally, it might still be better than no engagement at all." And, as an SME observed: "If there is no engagement, then signals are missed. And you are not allowed to explore those opportunities. This happened with Hamas which, even under Clinton, they were writing to Madeline Albright saying that they wanted to talk to her. And they've been politically signaling since then. But because the political lines are drawn so definitively, there's no room left to maneuver."

4. The need to leverage all aspects of national power – DIME

The unique nature of the stabilization and reconstruction environment, which requires attention to the motivations for an insurgency while fighting for hearts and minds and building towards a legitimate and stable end-state, places strong emphasis on mobilizing and integrating all elements of national power, namely DIME – diplomatic, informational, economic, and military. At the level of strategic informational effects, participants recognized that IO encompasses all lines of DIME: "It is no longer a matter of exercising a military option with IO in support of it. There are other things that must be looked at. To look at it just from the military perspective is difficult to do, even in a DOD IO sense, because IO has to be integrated with the CMO [civil-military operations] plan, and the other elements." But participants concurred there are large, unresolved challenges in bringing all those parts together in lockstep.

Box 6. Addressing motivations for joining or supporting the insurgency

Participants recognized that addressing the motivations for an insurgency requires political action, and did not, therefore, discuss this issue systematically. And yet the discussion kept coming back to this central problem. A flavor of the opinions and observations follows:

The martyr as community or national hero

"A suicide bomber is a hero. Not only does his family get compensated, but his picture is on posters. The family becomes the hero of their neighborhood. It's like being a gold star mother, but it's spades. You know, you guys grew up believing in Santa Claus. These guys grow up believing that they'll never live to see 20, and that the greatest thing that they can achieve is to be immediately transported to Paradise by taking as many Israelis with them as possible. The point is this view is their reality; it is not your reality. So if you're going to create an informational campaign, if you're going to try to motivate them, you can't motivate them by appealing to something that YOU think makes some sense. It has to be something that THEY think makes sense." Other participants noted that, in the absence of a political track that can eliminate the motivation for violent resistance, an informational campaign would be unlikely to have any resonance with either the martyrs, or the population in which they are embedded.

Tangible benefits as an alternative to violence: economic carrots

Many participants suggested the importance of creating tangible gains for the communities – to offer potential insurgents a different line of employment, to make the wider community feel that they have something to lose, and to try to replace the social services and benefits that an insurgent group may be providing. As one participant argued: *If I am a 16 or 17 year old sitting on the fence, you've got to show me at my level some sort of visible, measurable outcome that shows I am benefiting from your presence. It can't be a signed document and that's it. It's got to be something visible, something demonstrable. It may be only one pebble at a time, but that pebble needs to be there, and you need to keep seeing it."* Some participants expressed concern about the scale of this type of engagement: *"How do you do that without getting into a spending campaign and spinning yourself dry trying to provide better goods and services to them? I mean that is a two-way sword."* Although another participant countered: *"Isn't it better spending dollars than losing people?"* But other participants noted that economic benefits, alone, will not solve political grievances where those exist. There have been lots of examples throughout history where groups have chosen collective suffering over economic or personal gain for a political or national cause.

National service and dignity

One participant noted: *"This is not just about payments. 'Things' or the lack thereof are not going to compel you to rise up or stand down, but hopelessness will. We need to offer them a way out of hopelessness. It is also about dignity."* One of the SME's concurred: *"If we look at the West Bank and Gaza, we see that becoming a terrorist was a process. It wasn't that Ahmed woke up one day and found that the Israelis had made an incursion into his refugee camp and he said, 'That's it, I'm going to become a bomber.' There always has been a very gradual process of transformations. And there's been grooming and there's been recruitment. So there are a number of complex factors at work there. But also in this society, in common with other internal conflicts, such as Northern Ireland and South Africa and Bosnia, is the culture of national sacrifice, and particularly to these young people, this becomes terribly important in terms of that process of becoming a terrorist. So the decision isn't 'I'm going to become a terrorist,' but rather it is 'I am going to make a sacrifice for my nation.' In fact, it is the same idea of 'national sacrifice' that you find in many state armed forces. In the Palestinian case, there are complex and mixed messages that merge together the ideas of national duty, resistance, armed violence and the eventual targeting of civilians as a legitimate enterprise. But still, I think the motivations of honor, sacrifice and recognition are much stronger than any financial motive."* Other participants acknowledged the value of this observation from their own experience: *"If we think about our own reasons for joining up, there was this thing that appealed to us about serving. And so the same thing is true for other young people I would guess;"* and *"Before, our recruitment into the army was based on rewards – money and education. But now it is more about patriotism, and how you are going to be a better person."*

Fear

Participants noted that many insurgent organizations – even those that represent widespread political grievances – also use fear to ensure the loyalty or acquiescence of any potential dissenters (or collaborators) in the population. On this issue, participants noted that the military can play a role, if it can provide security for those who wish to dissent or collaborate. The problem is, however, that the guarantee of security must be very high before the dissenter will feel safe enough to act. And in an asymmetric environment, it is precisely the security environment that the insurgent targets to great effect. (See Box 2.)

Participants were concerned that the theory of "we should all work together" has not yet become a reality, and that there remained strong organizational problems that prevented a coordinated, integrated approach. They also noted that "thinking in phases" was not very helpful for a COIN/SSTRO situation, especially when different elements of DIME are tasked with different phases, for two reasons. First because past experience suggests that no one was seriously thinking about the continuum from Phase 3 to Phase 4 (combat to SSTRO); and, second, because in COIN/SSTRO there is not always a clear distinction between Phase 3 and Phase 4 – some days it is more of one, other days more of the other. As one participant observed: "We need to be thinking about the continuum of Phases 1 through 4 before we get into these things. We need the overall strategic perspective, because it links directly with what we do and how we do it. As the military, we're very good at doing Phase 3. That is how we are organized, trained and equipped. But we don't have the 'how' in terms of connecting it back to peace and stability."

What can be achieved by IO is determined by looking across DIME, and determining what can be done in each of those areas by IO.

The U.S. is currently out of balance on DIME, with the military taking the lead role.

Someone has to worry about the continuum between Phase 3 and 4, and how it trains with what we [the military] are doing.

Participants concurred that, ideally, the military needed clear strategic guidance on the proposed end-state and overall information strategy to effectively fight the informational fight in SSTRO: "Objectives need to come down from the strategic communication perspective. We need a stable strategic goal before IO can start to win the hearts and minds." However, many were concerned that this overall strategic vision was sometimes lacking, which meant that, by default, the military was shaping policy through its actions on the ground. Some also thought that overall coordination mechanisms were lacking, and that strategic direction doesn't get down to the combatant commanders with clarity, in the way that it should. Others wondered who is in charge of the overarching IO effort in DIME. Overall, there was a sense that DIME is what should be happening, but it isn't happening yet. These issues are picked up again in Part 4 of this report.

Part 3. The challenge of response: The battle for legitimacy and informational effects

Looking across the different aspects of the changed COIN/SSTRO battlespace (Part 2), participants accepted that the core challenge for an effective response was to "win the hearts and minds" of the population, and that the military, as the main presence on the ground, is strongly implicated in this fight. Taking a deeper dive into these issues, participants concurred that the war for hearts and minds is ultimately a battle for perceived legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the population – that is the legitimacy and credibility of the intervening power and the host nation versus that of the insurgents. As already noted in Parts 1 and 2, the cornerstone for this effort is the offer of a political track or end-state that is seen to address the political grievances or fears of the population. But even if that political cornerstone is on offer, the fight to win hearts and minds can still be formidable. The workshop spawned significant discussions around the role of information and cumulative informational effects in establishing and maintaining credibility and legitimacy, and so to win the peace.

A key conclusion of the discussions was the importance of message resonance and consistency. To be effective, your message must "resonate" with the hopes, desires and fears of the population, be expressed in terms that they understand, and be consistent across all allied actors in terms of both words and actions. To date, this has proven to be a challenge for the U.S. As a number of participants underlined, U.S. information strategies often seem to make rational sense to us, but fail to affect the target population:

> *One of the problems we've had with U.S. PSYOP messages and propaganda is that nobody listens to them. They blow them off. We come up with new newspapers, magazines, TV stations, but if it's got the U.S. flag on it, it gets pushed aside. So you want to avoid, especially if you're dealing with the young people, you want to avoid preaching at all costs. Because that's what they'll push away from.*
>
> *We talk about fighting a war for hearts and minds, but…we have really only been appealing to minds. We say: 'This is why you want to be Democratic. This is why you want to be a self-determined society. This is why the Western way is the way to go, one person, one vote.' So while we are laying out a good argument, the insurgents are not bothering with any of that crap. They understand what motivates the people emotionally. You can make the best argument in the world, but they've got that Mom-and-Apple-Pie-Shaeed (martyr) thing going, and that reaches the people's hearts. So they can get people to do seemingly irrational things because of the emotional response. They know how to motivate symbolically, emotionally, and at their very core. So we have been fighting the mind-side, while they have been fighting the heart-side…and guess what? They are winning.*

Overall, discussions about the challenges of message resonance, and the informational dimensions of the battle for hearts and minds clustered around three inter-related issues: (1) how you are perceived; (2) how your message (agenda) is perceived; and, (3) the credibility of your message. These discussions, which are unpacked below, were mostly about the "shoulds" – that is, what the intervening power "should" do to tackle the challenges. But when participants considered the "shoulds" against their own experiences, they sometimes found more questions than answers. These "enduring challenges" are gathered together in Part 4 of the report.

1. The challenge of legitimacy (1): How you are perceived

Understanding how you are perceived by the target population is a critical building block for designing appropriate informational "shaping" effects: "We may not consider ourselves to be occupiers, but that doesn't answer the political question that the audience we have to influence may see us as imperialists, colonialists, occupiers etc. … Unless we factor in how they see us, we are wasting our time." Workshop discussions raised four elements that can shape baseline perceptions of U.S. legitimacy in the eyes of the population:

Residual informational effects of past (historical) actions, which form the "informational prequel" against which your intentions and actions will be assessed. For the U.S. in Iraq, the residual informational effects of past policies and action are particularly important, given the country's long-standing interventions in the Middle East region, as well as Iraq in particular. As a senior military commander noted, "[How we are perceived] is not something that starts with a decision by us to engage." Rather, it is based on our past engagements in the area, our past policies and how those things have shifted over time as our own national interests and leaders have shifted. Participants discussed the different turns in U.S. policy in and around Iraq since the 1970s, and noted how this zigzagging political history would necessarily affect current perceptions of U.S. intentions. As the senior military commander noted: "In the eyes of the indigenous population or a would be insurgent, they see a path that is not walked straight. They see someone approaching them and changing directions. And so they are not sure what to expect. … This becomes the essence of where problems tend to emerge and where resistance occurs to the implementation of well-intended policy." And augmenting this actual history are the myriad conspiracy theories about U.S. actions and intentions, which carry currency with many local audiences, and have been exacerbated by the U.S.' friendship with Israel as well as with certain unpopular Arab regimes (see next point). Understanding both the actual and imagined political histories, and how these impact the perceptual environment of different sub-state audiences in Iraq, is critical for "assessing both the risks and opportunities that are inherent in the development,

> *In any public information strategy, we need to know what our adversaries are saying about us. Unless we factor in how they see us, we are wasting our time.*

projection and articulation of any information strategy." Beyond this, it is important to understand that while conspiracy theories are a fact of life in the Middle East, they are also empowered by any perceived hypocrisy in an actor's actions or words, in a "well if they are capable of doing this, then they are probably also doing that" sort of logic. For the U.S., this raises the challenge of message coherence, consistency and credibility, which is picked up again below.

Residual informational effects from regional friendships: The mistrust of U.S. intentions. Many participants concurred that America's strong support for Israel likely negatively influences the perceptions of U.S. intentions in the Arab and Islamic worlds. However, others wondered whether Arab and Islamic actors really cared all that much about the Palestinians, or were just appropriating their cause:

> *A lot of people who we are having problems with – from Bin Laden to some of the insurgents in Iraq – all claim to be great supporters and defenders of the Palestinian people, in addition to their own agendas. Some people argue that if we solve the Palestinian question, we'll be on our way to solving all these other problems too. But I don't buy that. I think a great deal of the other 'Islam versus the West' problems that we're having are based mostly on the local circumstances in those countries. And if the Palestinian question is solved tomorrow, then everybody parties and has a good time. But the next morning they wake up in their own home in their own country, and they still have the same problems that they had the day before.*

An SME agreed that, at least with respect to al-Qaeda, their appropriation of the Palestinian issue was an afterthought. The SME also strongly agreed that local movements must be understood in terms of local problems. However, it is also true that flare-ups with the Palestinian issue and the status of Jerusalem have and do spark unrest in the Arab and Islamic street:

> *If you look across other Islamic and Arab nationalist movements in the region as far back as the 1970s, you will see that Palestine and the resonance of the occupation were and remain very much a touchstone. I would say there is less cause for suspicion about the linkages in those cases… When Ariel Sharon took his walk on the Haram al-Sharif,[5] the demonstrations and riots weren't just in Gaza and Ramallah and Jerusalem. There were protests and marches in Jakarta and Cairo, and Bradford and Karachi. In that sense, the Palestinian/Jerusalem issues have become part of a symbolic global discourse with local mobilizing potential. No matter how illogical that may seem to us.*

The broader point, which many participants accepted, is that from the U.S. perspective, its close alignment with Israel (given the current state of that conflict) is a challenge in

5. In September 2000, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made a provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount (site of the al-Aqsa mosque). The confrontations that ensued – between unarmed Palestinians throwing stones and armed Israeli police – is considered to mark the beginning of the second Palestinian Intifada (See Case Study, Appendix B).

Box 7. The challenge of legitimacy: Takeaways from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies.

Never assume you are on the moral high ground, and that you therefore don't need to message. (The challenge of perceptual informational effects – Operation Defensive Shield)

Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield six months after 9/11, and shortly after a Palestinian suicide bombing campaign inside Israel had killed 127 Israelis in one month alone. The Israelis assumed that their moves against Palestinian militant groups would be seen as part of the "war on terror," and would be perceived as legitimate by international audiences (particularly the U.S.). They neglected to undertake a strategic communication campaign oriented at the international community, whose objective should have been to underscore the "legitimacy" of Israeli actions, and advertise the efforts they were taking to minimize civilian casualties. As participants noted:

- *They thought is was not a huge jump to equate Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad with al-Qaeda….Their expectation was 'now that the West has been attacked, it understands what we have been going through, and they will support us.'*
- *They didn't bother with an information campaign advertising their humanitarian efforts (to minimize civilian casualties during the Operation) to the larger international community, because they assumed that they held the moral high ground by [the] dint of 9/11.*

In the event, and especially after the blowback from the Battle of Jenin when accusations that the Israelis had committed a "massacre" and "war-crimes" gained widespread currency in the international media, Israel came under intense pressure to end its operations in the West Bank. On a broader note, participants concurred that it is imperative in this new global information environment to understand the "perceptual terrain" of the audiences that matter. How do **they** define the moral high ground? Never assume that just because what you think you are doing is right means that everyone else will perceive it that way. Strategic communication, along with clear messaging of your intentions and humanitarian actions at all levels, may or may not address the problem of the moral high ground, but it will at least ensure that you communicate your case and that you do not fall victim to false rumors and allegations, as happened to the Israelis in the Battle of Jenin.

An intervening armed state tends to be seen as "Goliath" while non-state actors that resist are often cast as "Davids." (The challenge of perceptual informational effects – ODS)

In the asymmetric battlespace, the perceived underdog tends to elicit sympathy, which can translate into a "hearts and minds" advantage. As one participant noted: *"What you've got with most operations is a David and Goliath type situation… and the information advantage goes to the weaker side. I can't explain the dynamics of it, but we see it throughout history."* This dynamic was clearly evident during the first Palestinian Intifada, when images of children throwing stones at Israeli tanks ceded the moral high ground to the Palestinians and brought international pressure to bear on Israel to enter a negotiated peace process with the PLO (which had formerly been labeled as a "terrorist" organization). During the second Intifada, the Palestinians lost their unambiguous "David" status in the eyes of the international community when they resorted to armed resistance and suicide bombings. However, during ODS when the Israeli military reoccupied Palestinian towns and villages and the pictures and stories of civilian casualties and hardships mounted, Israel was again susceptible to being cast as Goliath. With respect to the media's role, a number of participants concurred that the Western press and human rights groups tend to assume the mantle of "watch dog" when big, democratic powers (like Israel or the United States) undertake military action against weaker non-state opponents, to ensure that the nation's core values, like respect for human rights, are not violated in the process. Although no doubt also, some journalists are just pursuing a story that will make the headlines. As one participant stated: *"A lot of these media guys think they are the next Woodward and Bernstein."* Either way, when things go wrong – like in the Battle of Jenin – there is a tendency to assume the worst and believe the rumors that "Goliath" has let loose on David.

While participants had no clear solution to this dilemma, some suggested that the "Goliath syndrome" may be mitigated by a broad-based information campaign to advertise the humanitarian efforts being undertaken to ensure the safety of innocents, and to explain the rationale in order to build legitimacy for the action and objectives, before, during and after the offensive.

terms of the perceptual environment of Arabic and Islamic audiences, making the U.S.' fight for trust and credibility with those audiences more difficult.

Inadvertent hubris: Assuming you are on the moral high ground. A number of participants argued that, no matter how much you believe that what you are doing is legitimate and for the better good of all, you should never assume you are on the moral high ground. (See Box 7.) One participant, sharing the views from a U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) conference,[6] which brought together Foreign Defense Attaches, stated: "There is a real sense that both American messaging and policy project cultural hubris…" Much hard work is needed to discern where the moral high ground lies in the hearts and minds of the population, and to craft information strategies that resonate with that terrain. This process cannot be just about adjusting the words so they sound right. Rather, it is mostly about backing a policy that is seen to be legitimate (see below). Participants noted that, in the global information environment, the challenges are magnified because of the need to also resonate with the moral high ground of your own domestic audience.

When your actions contradict the values you profess: The "Goliath Syndrome." Participants noted that a "David and Goliath" syndrome seems to color most encounters between armed state actors and lesser armed "resistance" actors who claim to represent a cause: "What you've got with most operations is a "David and Goliath" type situation… and the information advantage goes to the weaker side. I can't explain the dynamics of it, but we see it throughout history." This is particularly true when the U.S. is involved – both because of its superpower status, as well as its stated purpose of upholding and spreading freedom and democracy. Such a value-laden agenda brings expectations that all U.S. actions – including those of war-fighting – will conform to and uphold those values: "I strongly believe that there is a higher moral obligation in the minds of the rest of the world that this country act from the moral high ground. Our ability to act effectively – even among those who may not like us – has always depended upon the sense that what we did…respected the dignity and worth of human beings and of freedom....If you lose sight of that in your information strategy, you might as well go home." In other words, when your actions contravene the values you are purporting to represent, this hollows out your legitimacy and credibility, and the "war of ideas" will be lost. This issue has proven particularly challenging for COIN/SSTRO in today's GIE. (See Box 7, as well as Boxes 10, 12 and 14 located on pages 43, 46 and 60 respectively.)

2. The challenge of legitimacy (2): Crafting messages that resonate

A critical indicator of effective message resonance is "reverberation," that is when members of the population pick up the message and repeat it to secondary and tertiary audiences. A growing "buzz" indicates message traction. But how do you make messages that stick?

6. SOCOM hosted a Foreign Military Attachés Conference 18-20 Oct 2005, as part of a SOCOM-STRATCOM partnership in a strategic communication initiative called the Global Rewards Information Program. The intent of the initiative is to leverage the various USG Reward Programs and encourage development of similar indigenous programs to increase awareness and encourage increased participation in fostering an anti-terrorism environment on a global scale.

A few participants suggested that one way to make messages stick is through "information dominance" – by which they meant inundating the population with messages highlighting the positive impact of U.S. assistance. Repetition of this "good news" message, they argued should ensure its penetration, and should help to win the loyalty of the population. A senior military commander strongly disagreed: "Unless your message resonates with the people, it will not move, no matter how technologically superior you are. Rare is the day that a message will be stronger than culture." For a message to resonate, another participant noted, you have to start from where the foreign population looks at things – their hopes and fears – rather than from where we look at things. Participants concurred this was far easier said than done, and many thought there is still too much "mirror-imaging" in U.S. informational efforts, with insufficient capabilities to craft messages on the issues and in the idioms that resonate with the foreign audience. Discussions centered on two critical capabilities required for creating messages that resonate: cultural capability, and a more specific situational capability.

> *When you have a buzz going more broadly, that is when you get the impact you seek.*

Cultural capability: Are we there yet? Participants concurred that COIN/SSTRO information objectives require deep cultural knowledge, and that the military's need for cultural capability has expanded considerably since 2002. But there was disagreement as to whether or not the military's cultural capabilities were currently up to the task or being used in the most efficient manner:

> *Subject matter experts are extremely important. We have a lot of them. I'm not sure that this county makes particularly good use of them.*

> *The Army PSYOP force has guys and ladies that have lived in the region, studied the culture, or come from those cultures and backgrounds. They speak the language. They know the religion. That's what we try to do in PSYOP. However, your 21 year-old boy off the farm in Iowa doesn't know about these things. And the scary part is that a lot of other IO practitioners don't understand these things. So they "mirror image" – they use a U.S. perspective or a Western perspective and, then are puzzled when it doesn't work. Why are we creating another generation of terrorists? That is what happens if you don't understand the motivations.*

A number of participants suggested that conducting target audience analysis was critical, and that polling is a good way to gather grounded information to inform appropriate messages. However, others noted that polling can be "very deceptive" with the results shaped by who is asking the question, who the respondent thinks the audience is, and how the poll's question and answer choices are structured. Polls are also not necessarily predictive of actual choices and behaviors. Overall, participants were dissatisfied with the military's cultural capabilities especially at the lower levels, which, from an IO perspective, is where it is needed most. This issue will be revisited in Part 4.

Situational capability: The need for local knowledge on a war-time footing. A number of participants argued that a focus on "cultural capability" can be misleading, given that what is also needed is fine-grained "locale-specific situational and cultural awareness," meaning, in-depth knowledge of the local social networks, power relations, and issue clusters, which can be very different from and yet interact with those in other locales and regions, and which can also evolve rapidly in an on-going conflict situation. This situational capability, which should be thought of as building local knowledge on a wartime footing, cannot be acquired overnight. It requires time and on-going engagement on the ground. As one participant noted, even after two years in Sierra Leone, getting inside the mindset of the locals, to see things as they do, is still challenging: "I've got an indigenous population in Sierra Leone that I've been trying to influence for at least two years. I'm getting there but it's very, very easy for us as Western democratic nations to look at things from our perspective. We have to be able to understand their culture, their society, their history and their attitudes and behavior right now and then be able to influence them in the future. We have to get in there and ask questions." Some participants thought that the U.S. still doesn't quite get the notion that long-term, ear-to-the ground engagement is essential for building good IO: "One thing really irks me every time we try to do Information Operations: everyone wants an immediate solution. In my background, IO or PSYOP are not short-term weapons systems. You have to establish and build credibility over years. So any IO solution has got to be built up over time. There is no quick fix in the IO realm."

> *Polling, which is a favorite thing to do in different countries, can be very deceptive.*
>
> *There is no quick fix in the IO realm…You have to establish and build credibility over years.*

Developing appropriate measures of effectiveness (MOE) are critical for assessing and monitoring the reception and impact of information operations: "Are messages resonating? Are they having an effect?" An ongoing monitoring mechanism is also critical to keeping abreast of how socio-political dynamics are evolving, to grasp opportunities in the shifting sands of local political objectives and networks: "Strategy evolves on a changing battlefield of both actions and ideas…it's a floating crap game. And you need to be able to understand that. A rigid policy doesn't work."

3. The challenge of credibility: Message delivery and coherence

Credibility is measured by the degree to which you are trusted and believed. Without credibility, there can be no legitimacy. Participants discussed five elements that can make or break message credibility in COIN/SSTRO ranging from how a message is moved, through to the impact of physical actions and encounters, through to the consistency and seeming "truthfulness" of the messages themselves.

Use appropriate messengers: go local. Message credibility is greatly influenced by the local social capital of the messenger. In this sense, a respected member of the target audience is by far a superior conduit for moving a message than a U.S. spokesperson or designate. As a senior military commander noted: "Understand who the most effective messenger is. You'll never be the second cousin, twice removed in a valley 25 km away. And that cousin's message will always resonate more than yours." In most cases, it is not appropriate to bring in someone with language competency alone: "You've got to be culture specific in looking at credible messengers. It's no good to fly somebody in from Detroit who speaks fluent Arabic to talk to somebody in Saudi Arabia. They will laugh them out of the place." However, a senior military commander pinpointed the challenge of finding a local leader who would be amenable to carrying an American message to an unfriendly or fence-sitting population: "Often the reason local leaders are respected and have status in their societies is because of their independence, and opposition to outside forces." The risk is that an opinion leader may actually lose his status – and be cast as a collaborator – if he sides with an external force and promotes an agenda that lacks basic legitimacy in the eyes of the population (especially if he is seen to receive a pay-off or benefits for his spokesperson role). There is no easy solution here, save for the long, hard work of building trust, and proving through your actions that your intentions, and the intentions of your government and local allies, line up with the desires of the population.

Use appropriate media: go local, and do not avoid local media, even if they are considered "hostile." Message credibility can also be enhanced when it is delivered through familiar media, which are not always the forms that the U.S. has used in the past. Rather than relying on the more familiar-to-the-West methods of flyers, radio and television, SMEs underlined the importance of seeking out "popular" mediums for communicating messages. In the West Bank and Gaza, for example, "popular culture is the primary method for transmitting political messages, not radios and newspapers." Favored mechanisms, which often target youth, include DVDs, posters and murals, music and theater in the schools and at summer camps. Others noted the potential importance of "night letters" (meaning a message written on a loose-leaf notebook paper and tacked to a post, which is a means favored by some local insurgent groups) and text messaging, which is now one of the principal means for communication in the Middle East, especially within younger age groups.

Building outwards from the Jenin case study, where Israeli mistrust and exclusion of certain media led to disastrous effects (see Box 8), a number of participants stressed the need for the U.S. to engage al-Jazeera "every chance we get," because of its credibility and influence with the target audience. One participant considered that the decision to treat al-Jazeera as an enemy and avoid engagement was "one of the most foolish mistakes made in Iraq." True, the U.S. may not like what al-Jazeera reports, and cannot trust how they will present a story, but "the rule in politics is every minute I'm on the air is one minute my adversary is not on the air." Beyond this, concerted engagement – meaning "day in and day out contact" – is the only way to establish credibility. As one participant observed: "They may like you or they may hate you. But if they decide that you are leveling with them, your opportunity to influence increases enormously."

Ensure message continuity: The information sequel to physical acts. Credibility requires constant communication and messaging to explain intended actions and motives, before, during and especially after a physical act. In a COIN/SSTRO environment, every physical action creates an informational effect. When "the people" see, experience or hear about physical actions, they form perceptions about what happened and why, which color their views of subsequent events. As noted in Part 1, U.S. commanders are expert at war-gaming and conducting kinetic operations, but are less expert at appreciating and anticipating the "informational sequel" to these actions. Insurgents have readily filled this "informational gap," negatively "spinning" U.S. actions in the minds of the population, by highlighting collateral damage or casting doubts on the action's rationale. An insurgent-dominated information sequel can undermine the physical success of an operation, by handing the insurgents a strategic win. As a senior military commander noted: "I think we see this dynamic all the time. Skilled leaders will recognize this, and build it into their plans."

Discussions built out from the Jenin case study. In the Battle of Jenin, the Israelis suffered a strategic defeat because of disinformation and rumors about their actions – namely, accusations that the IDF had committed a brutal civilian massacre – made it into global headlines. (See Box 9 on page 40.) Participants concurred that, when it comes to rumors, "first past the post sticks," especially if you are already perceived as a "Goliath" in the battlespace. The instantaneous interconnectedness of the GIE places a heavy priority on pre-operation planning to prepare the informational battlespace, and

Box 8. Engage the media, including those you don't trust: Takeaway from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies

Even if you don't trust certain media, engage them. Restricting media gives an informational advantage to your adversary. (Battle of Jenin)

In this global information environment, you need to engage the press, even those you don't trust. The Israelis learned this the hard way as (untrue) rumors that they had committed a massacre in Jenin spread across Western headlines. The Israelis did not trust the foreign media and put heavy restrictions on their access to information and to the area of Jenin. The Palestinians, by contrast, fully engaged the media on a number of levels. On the "popular" level, Palestinians living in and around the camp used new communications technologies to "get the story out." As one participant noted, *"It was what we might call a media swarm as opposed to a media storm. The moment the IDF started coming close to Jenin you had cell phone networks among 400 NGOs in the area saying the IDF is in the area. When it was clear that they were going towards the refugee camp, then that buzz turned into pictures, as dozens of Palestinians with digital cameras took pictures and downloaded them by email. And the journalists were drawn to this buzz. The journalists weren't actually at the spot themselves, so they had to depend on these accounts and pictures for their story. And I think this is a major reason why there were huge distortions of fact about the scale of what was happening."* On an official level, the Palestinian leadership also picked up on this buzz and declared that a massacre was taking place, and the pictures of the physical destruction were evidence that this could be true. Because the Israelis had created a "media vacuum" on their side, there was no counter-narrative or evidence, until after the rumors had made it into Western headlines. And by then, the damage was done. Participants concurred that even if you don't trust certain media, it is better to fully engage and give them as much information and access as possible.

Box 9. The information prequel and sequel: Takeaways from the Israeli-Palestinian case-studies

When it comes to rumors of war-fighting gone wrong, the first story on to the wire sticks. Even if the story later proves to be exaggerated or untrue, the damage to your reputation (and your moral legitimacy) is hard to erase. (Jenin)

IDF engagement in Jenin was bounded by clear ROE, with provisions to ensure the evacuation and safety of civilians. However, especially after the deaths of 13 soldiers in one engagement, actions were undertaken to prioritize the safety of the soldiers, with more aggressive attacks and the use of bulldozers to "clear" large sections of the camp. This led to civilian deaths, and images of seemingly mass destruction. The result was a loud public outcry from international actors, the Palestinians, the Israeli left, and the media, with some sources claiming that a massacre and other war crimes had been committed. The story was picked up and repeated in news media headlines. Although the accusation of a massacre later proved to be false, the damage had been done. Workshop participants concurred that once a sensationalist story makes headlines, it is hard to set it straight: "Once you are responding to rumors, forget it." The "buzz" and outrage about alleged Israeli actions in Jenin (against the backdrop of the GWOT in other theaters) resulted in international pressure for the Israelis to prematurely end the overall "Operation Defensive Shield" campaign.

If you have truth to communicate, then do so before, during and after action. (Jenin)

In this global information environment, PA around a military operation is as important to success as military IO. The Israelis undertook a lot of humanitarian planning around the Battle of Jenin, including IO and procedures to encourage civilians to leave the area, and to coordinate with the civil leadership of the city. But, they had no PA to advertise how they were conducting the operation to external audiences. As one participant observed: "It seems they didn't set the information environment so that everyone knew what measures they were taking to protect the people, and not to seem heavy-handed." By not getting this message out, before and during the battle, the Israelis were in no position to counter the rumors that a massacre was taking place once the fighting started to heat up. The information liability was particularly strong because of the symbolism of the refugee camp were the battle took place. One of the reasons why the Israelis didn't bother to message to external audiences is because they didn't trust the press, and therefore didn't engage them, and tried to keep them out.

Information Operations need to keep going, even after the physical action is over. (Gaza)

While noting Israel's success with containing Hamas from claiming a victory during the Gaza withdrawal itself (i.e., from claiming that armed actions had compelled the Israeli withdrawal), a number of participants thought the Israelis were remiss for not continuing their messaging drumbeat after the withdrawal. The Israelis stopped messaging, but the Palestinians did not. And in the informational vacuum that followed the pull-out, there was no credible message to counter Hamas' claim that their resistance had made the Israelis leave: *"The Israelis should have kept beating that message. Why is it that 84% of the people today believe that it was the armed factions that caused the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip. Why is that?"* The Hamas informational win had follow-on strategic effects, by bolstering the legitimacy and credibility of the strategy of armed resistance, and of Hamas itself, in the eyes of the people. By not continuing the drumbeat, one participant argued, the Israelis basically *"just walked away…And so you end up with a baseline that says 84% believe this, and that the West Bank will be next."* Overall, participants concurred that "we often stop talking about IO after the kinetics have stopped," but by so doing, a physical win could be spun by adversaries into a strategic loss.

> *When the last guy comes across the border on the Gaza Strip, the Sharon's of this world need to continue with the messaging drumbeat.*

preempt damaging disinformation. It is critical to document and advertise what you do, especially the humanitarian efforts and extra own force risks that are taken to protect civilian lives: "[In Iraq] we see new allegations every week that we are using phosphorus or bombing children…the only way you can really protect yourself with the media is to be able to document what you're doing."

Participants concurred that the practice of embedding journalists had worked well in Iraq, at least for favorable domestic coverage, and that combat camera has proven valuable for documenting own side actions, and countering misinformation. Pictures can prove that "yes, we attacked this mosque, but see, they were firing from it." However, some participants noted that such photo evidence may resonate with domestic and Western audiences – because they show the acceptable return of fire – but may have no currency with the local population. (See Box 5 on "cultural dilemmas.") While agreeing that the information prequel and on-going documentation have become essential fires in COIN/SSTRO, participants also noted that they can still be de-prioritized by tactical tradeoffs. This problem arose in both Afghanistan and Iraq on occasion, when trying to bring in combat camera: "We couldn't get them butt space on a helicopter because the tactical commander decided he needed more guns, and he didn't need a guy running around with a camera." These kinds of decisions, the participant continued, are made independently of the bigger picture of what message that needs to get out, "especially in the case where things go wrong, which they quite often do."

Actions and Words (1): Soldiers are your "informational" frontline. Message credibility can be reinforced or eviscerated by soldier actions and interactions on the ground. What soldiers do – how they approach people, how they behave during a confrontation, how they are outfitted – create lasting informational effects in the eyes of the population: "How our soldiers behave on the ground – good or bad – is extremely important. Once an act has been committed – good or bad – it will create a perception in the minds of the people, and that perception will influence how subsequent events are seen – good or bad." The population's interactions with soldiers at checkpoints, routine patrols, and during and after operations form the "real experience" that the people use to judge the credibility of your intentions. That human encounter can make or break the trust of the individual, and/or the community that you're trying to keep on your side, or you're trying to influence away from the insurgents. Participants concurred that trust takes a very long time to build up, and only a moment to destroy. On a related point, overall force posture and positioning can send important messages to the people, and some participants thought the U.S. was missing an opportunity here: "Apparently our troops are pretty much required to be kevlared up at all times, and that often sends the wrong message. British commanders have greater latitude, and can use that to send different messages…" However, participants also recognized that both force posture and soldier behavior become particularly tricky in the mixed COIN/SSTRO environment, as will be discussed in Part 4.

Building outwards from the Jenin case study, participants observed that, in this wired world, a soldier's behavior can be captured and broadcast across the globe, including back to the domestic audience: "You have a situation now where the entire world may be watching what Corporal Smith does at a roadblock somewhere." And, just as in the

aftermath of the Jenin incident, Israeli human rights groups led a domestic outcry against certain of the soldiers' documented actions, so do Western watchdogs observe and comment on the legal and ethical correctness of U.S. behavior and actions in war (see Box 10). An SME noted that generally speaking, democratic nations have a low threshold for tolerating violations of fundamental values – and specifically human rights. And it is this value-based orientation that is a contributing factor to why democracies lose small wars: when the fighting gets drawn out and dirty, and own force casualties mount, the home population withdraws its support.[7] In sum, participants agreed that troops at the lowest levels need to understand that their behavior creates an "information effect" that potentially can have strategic repercussions.

> *It is public diplomacy in the last three meters that counts.*
>
> *IO is only as good as the physical actions on the ground. You can't be saying one thing and doing another.*

Actions and Words (2): Deliver the Goods. Credibility requires that you are seen to "deliver the goods, not just sell the goods." If you or your government are promising things that you can't deliver, or that the local population does not value, your credibility and capacity to influence are lost. As a senior military commander underlined: "The message comes in the sustained experience of the people." And failure to deliver is fuel for insurgent recruits: "You said that my life was going to change for the better. But my life has changed not a bit. I can prove for myself from my experience that your message is false. So I think you are a liar. And so did my father. So I'm going to seek to kill you, because I know you will do nothing for my son."

Maintain consistency and credibility across different audiences: A discussion of the relationship between IO and PA in COIN/SSTRO/GIE. Participants had an extended discussion about the difficulty of de-conflicting and synchronizing IO and PA in COIN/SSTRO, given the new interconnectedness of the GIE. They debated two distinct challenges with respect to maintaining the consistency and credibility of message content across different target audiences: first, across the different audiences within the theater of operations; and, second, across foreign and domestic (U.S.) audiences.

Message consistency across different "in theater" intentions and operations. The COIN/SSTRO theater presents inter-connected local audiences, some of whom you want to compel (adversaries) and some of whom you want to attract (the people). From an information effects perspective, problems arise because operations security (OPSEC), military deception (MILDEC) and PSYOP are often used to shape operations against insurgents in ways that can, at times, conflict with the broader imperative for building confidence and trust among the local population. This is particularly the case under conditions of a "mosaic war," where the intensity of combat operations and reconstruction efforts may vary greatly between adjoining districts, or even within

7. See Merom (2003).

Box 10. Soldier's behavior can also create informational effects at home, and hollow out domestic support: Takeaway from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies.

Western democracies have low tolerance for the moral ambiguities of kinetic actions. This is especially so when, in the heat of battle, mistakes or civilian casualties occur. Kinetic action that violates the law of war creates informational effects that decrease domestic and Western support.

The accusation that the IDF had committed a "massacre" in Jenin proved to be false. However, following the loss of 13 soldiers in a single incident, the intensity of IDF operations increased, causing highly visible civilian effects that were labeled as war crimes by an the Israeli human rights group B'tselem (which cited violations such as bulldozing handicapped civilians in their homes, destroying ambulances, deaths of detained persons, civilians used as human shields). In particular, one soldier's seemingly callous behavior, willingly relayed in an after-action interview, drew much domestic attention and concern. B'tselem's accusations, in combination with the initial global outcry that civilians had been massacred, led to some loss of Israeli public support for the operation overall, despite high domestic motivation in light of the Palestinians' earlier suicide bombing campaign.

a single district; where shifts between stability-oriented versus combat-oriented messaging can happen rapidly and often; and, where different potentially U.S.-friendly audiences may not like or trust each other.

Many participants argued that building local allies and winning hearts and minds in such a complex environment requires being as accurate and transparent about explaining your intentions and actions as OPSEC permits. As one participant opined: "When it comes to building and keeping allies, the foundation of a PA campaign, but also Information Operations, is truth. Truth is not malleable. When it is manipulated, you lose all credibility…As a political consultant, I can tell you that the first thing we look for in any campaign against our numerous adversaries is a misstatement of truth. It doesn't take much to destroy the credibility of an information strategy. The United States, as a white horse, means one black speck shows up very clearly. This is not true for our adversaries. It's just a burden and a political reality that we need to deal with." However, while accepting this logic of transparency and truth, some participants wondered at its practical feasibility, given that the audiences in Iraq are hardly a unified mass with numerous, overlapping, and changing divisions and interests both within "the people" and across the different insurgent groups. In addition, participants noted the "shifting sands" of the conflict terrain, where allegiances and alliances evolve and transmute as the conflict continues. Overall, participants remained perplexed by the challenge of consistent "across theater" messaging.

"It doesn't take much to destroy the credibility of an information strategy. The United States, as a white horse, means one black speck shows up very clearly.

Foreign and domestic audiences in the GIE: No more "iron fence." The GIE – where just about anyone can become an information producer with global reach, and where the distinctions between foreign and domestic media are blurred – has made it difficult, if not impossible, to retain an "iron fence" between IO and PA, that is to ensure the integrity of U.S. information that finds its way to U.S. domestic audiences. In this sense, workshop discussions echoed broader debates within DOD concerning the changing practical relationship between IO and PA (see Box 11). Participants concurred that IO is premised on influencing and shaping perceptions, which can result in messages that are, while truthful, "spun" to meet this premise. This lack of full transparency in messaging caused some to question the dividing line between truth and deception, which is the crux of the friction between PA and IO.[8] While some argued that a clear distinction between IO and PA must be upheld, many participants also accepted the inevitability of "message spillover," as the following workshop exchange illustrates**:**

> **Speaker 1:** *Information Operations is conducted against your potential adversaries, decision-makers and decision-making processes. Do we always tell the truth? No. But we cannot deceive the public. There should be a dividing line here between home audiences whom we don't do PSYOP against – whom we don't deceive or try to "influence. Media Operations or PA… that is a separate issue.*
>
> **Speaker 2:** *Are they really separate? I mean from today's information environment…in a practical sense. Are they really separate?*
>
> **Speaker 3:** *They are legally separate but in practice they are not. Something we tell a local audience at a Rotary Club meeting can have global exposure depending on who takes that message out.*
>
> **Speaker 4:** *Yes. For example, General X made a casual statement about religion, which was broadcast globally by text messaging on a cell phone that same day. It goes back to your point about living in a global 24/7 environment.*

The challenge of message spillover: new imperatives for transparency all around? Overall, participants agreed that it is impossible in today's GIE to keep a message intended for one target audience from reaching other target audiences. As one participant summarized: "You must make sure that you say the same thing even if you say it in different languages or using different words. You want to avoid saying one thing to one person and one thing to another with the belief that audience B will not find out what you said to audience A."

On a related point, participants noted how purely domestic discourse can spillover into the foreign battlespace and create detrimental strategic effects. Building out from the Gaza case study, participants noted that for domestic political reasons Prime Minister Sharon needed to "message" the pullout as a unilateral Israeli decision, even though

8. The loose use of the term "IO," even by practitioners, may in fact exacerbate this problem. IO includes both the capabilities of military deception (meant to deceive the adversary as to friendly operational intentions) and psychological operations (meant to influence perceptions based on credible messaging). "Messaging" here refers to psychological operations.

Box 11. Managing the "truth": IO and PA – the broader debates

The 1948 Smith-Mundt Act[1] requires that U.S. audiences are not subject to U.S. government information designed for foreign audiences. This basic prerequisite is the rationale for the strict dividing line between PA (which is meant to inform public audiences) and IO, some components of which are meant to shape and influence the perceptions and behaviors of foreign adversaries. But the interconnectedness of today's audiences – both within the COIN/SSTRO theater, and across the GIE – is posing difficult challenges for maintaining the "iron fence" that is supposed to separate PA from IO.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, both PA and IO have been placed within field-level "theater effects groups." The fact that these effects groups came into being – despite the shuttering of the DOD Office of Strategic Influence in early 2002 following fierce criticism – is indicative of the degree to which combatant commanders recognize a need to synchronize PA and IO. However, the possible implications of interpolating IO with PA has continued to worry senior DOD leaders as well as IO/PA practitioners. For example, in late 2004, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Gen. Richard B. Myers) expressed his concerns in a memorandum to the Joint Chiefs and U.S. combat commanders in the field: "Although both PA and IO conduct planning, message development and media analysis, the efforts differ with respect to audience, scope and intent, and must remain separate… While organizations may be inclined to create physically integrated PA/IO offices, such organizational constructs have the potential to compromise the commander's credibility with the media and the public."[2]

Concerned PA officers argue that their special and distinct access to commanders may be lost in the additional bureaucratic levels of theater effects groups, and, that the close alignment between PA and IO may lead to credibility issues with the media as IO planners are tempted to incorporate PA as part of their overall plan for "shaping effects." For their part, IO (and particularly PSYOP) planners tend to see the global war on terrorism as "a war of ideas," where information "is almost as powerful as bullets and bombs."[3] The strong influence of the media – local, regional and international – is an essential conduit for this fight, and some IO planners argue that "local" (foreign) media should be used to shape perceptions at the tactical level. Others, however, argue that such manipulation is dangerous, with potential blowback across two fronts. First is the risk of domestic U.S. blowback. A notable example occurred during the 2004 Fallujah operation: a briefing to local media by a Marine Corp spokesperson was picked up by CNN and other U.S. media, and was later revealed to have been part of a PSYOP and MILDEC plan that was targeting insurgents. According to a Pentagon spokesperson, the briefing had been "an attempt to get CNN to report something not true."[4] Second is the risk of blowback with the foreign audiences you are trying to win over. An example of this emerged when it was revealed that a U.S. PSYOP contractor (Lincoln Group) was paying to place positive articles in the Arab media and, "its Iraqi staff, or its subcontractors, sometimes pose as freelance reporters or advertising executives when they deliver the stories to Baghdad media outlets."[5] Such manipulation – once discovered – undermines credibility, even if the stories themselves are true.

There are valid arguments as to why the role of PA and the "iron fence" that separates it from IO needs to be rethought given the imperatives of today's practical realities. But the debates on how this relationship needs to be reforged are far from over.

1. U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, (Public Law 402), popularly referred to as the Smith-Mundt Act. The law prevents the distribution within the United States of official American information that was intended for foreign audiences.
2. See, Mazzetti, (2004). http://medialit.med.sc.edu/use_of_media.htm
3. See Keeton and McCann, (2005).
4. *Pentagon debate rages over 'information operations' in Iraq,* http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/12/02/pentagon.media/index.html.
5. See Mazzetti and Daragahi,(2005). http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-infowar30nov30,0,5638790.story

in the longer term this contributed to negative strategic consequences within the Palestinian political landscape. (See Box 12.) Looking closer to home, some participants argued that the use of the term "crusades" in U.S. domestic speeches in the run-up to the war in Iraq was likely unhelpful for setting the right perceptual environment with the Iraqis, no matter how well this image may have played at home. Another participant observed that the term "axis of evil" which was developed for domestic political consumption has had major implications for U.S. foreign policy. A number of participants concurred that the military – as the front line that faces the perceptual environment of the population – needs to be fully aware of how their mission is being framed in domestic pronouncements at all levels. Given the GIE, domestic political rhetoric is also an informational fire (or misfire) in the fight for foreign hearts and minds, and must be treated as such.

The old boundaries between IO and PA are worse than arbitrary...they are downright dangerous.

You may want to tell your domestic audience that you are not an occupier, because you don't think you are. And yet that is such a blatant lie in the eyes of your adversaries, that you have shot yourselves in the foot to begin with.

Offering a practical perspective on how to deal with message spillover, a senior military commander urged that messages should always address at least two audiences, namely,

Box 12. The added challenges of the GIE: Takeaway from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies

Political messages that target domestic audiences can spill over to other audiences, and create detrimental informational effects in the COIN theater.

In order to secure domestic approval for the Gaza withdrawal, Prime Minister Sharon had to send a strong message to his people that this action was taken by Israel, for Israel and on Israel's terms. There would be no negotiation with the Palestinians because, according to Sharon, there was no "partner for peace" on the Palestinian side. In Israeli eyes, the Palestinian Authority was no longer an acceptable partner. While this unilateralism played well with the domestic audience, it also created strategic informational effects within the Palestinian political landscape. As an SME explained, Sharon's unilateral moves further eviscerated the remaining shreds of legitimacy and authority of President Abbas, and his platform for a negotiated peace with Israel. Abbas was unable to claim any credit for the Israeli withdrawal. As one participant noted, "*If Abbas had at least gotten a handshake, he could have said, 'Look, this is what we got through peaceful negotiations.'*" But that is not what happened, and in the informational void that occurred after the pull-out, Hamas stepped in to fill the gap and claim the credit. The Hamas message was: *"See, our strategy of armed resistance has worked. Through our efforts we have made the occupation too painful for the Israelis and they have left."* The credibility and legitimacy of Hamas' means and strategy were seemingly vindicated, which contributed to their growing popular support and, arguably, to their electoral win in January 2006. From an overall strategic effects point of view, the Israeli domestic-centric messaging campaign, may well have contributed to the empowerment of a far more recalcitrant and radicalized adversary.

"the indigenous population that we are trying to influence and the population that committed us. If we aren't addressing both, we'll miss an opportunity." An example of how to do this, based on the situation of an insurgent firing from behind a human shield with U.S. return fire, would be to explain the technical perspective (legitimate and necessary return fire) to your own domestic audience, while also including a message that is sensitive to your adversary – for example that the insurgents were acting cowardly by hiding behind human shields: "The technical perspective will satisfy the culture that committed us, but it won't resonate at all with the insurgent," so it is important to add the additional cultural messaging to discredit the insurgent's methods. This gives your message an "offensive turn." The commander also stressed, however, that truth is essential: "You can't make this up, because if we are engaged in public communication it must be truthful."

On a theoretical level, participants accepted that effective messaging in today's GIE requires understanding the different target audiences, crafting appropriate messages for each, and then eliminating any inconsistencies or conflicts. But many participants were concerned that the capability and vision to do this well are not in place at all levels. Moreover, many thought there is a pressing need to look beyond the "iron fence" distinctions between IO and PA, towards a more functional synchronization, so as to leverage each in its proscribed way, while minimizing the risk of "information fratricide" and a loss of credibility with local, international and U.S. audiences. These issues will be picked up again in Part 4.

Part 4. Summary of enduring challenges and concerns

While participants largely concurred about what "should" be done to "win the peace" in COIN/SSTRO, they also raised many questions and concerns about the practicalities of such an ideal-typical framework when it crashes into the hard, cold and messy reality of an actual COIN/SSTRO environment, especially given current U.S. military capabilities and organization. Workshop discussions identified a number of enduring concerns and dilemmas, which broke down across three main levels:

- "**The Big Picture,"** that is, concerns about how the military, and the wider DIME edifice, is adapting to meet the many challenges of the asymmetric enemy, and of the new requirements of SSTRO and IO as core competencies. Key questions here clustered around organizational issues, who is in charge, and the challenge of message consistency across different target audiences.
- "**Commander's Challenges,"** that is, core challenges faced by commanders in the field as they seek to rapidly adapt and take on new roles to meet COIN/SSTRO and IO demands, even as official doctrine and organizational backing lag behind. Core concerns at this level clustered around policy and doctrinal issues, procedural and capability issues, as well as basic human dilemmas.
- The **"Really Big Picture,"** that is the overall project for supporting "freedom" across the globe. Participants engaged this topic not because they are in a position to question that policy, but simply because they are participants in its delivery. Some wondered how to go about effecting fundamental and directed cultural change in foreign populations, whether it is even possible, and what the informational dimensions of the task involves.

Many of the challenges gathered below have already been alluded to in the earlier text. True to the modular format of this report, we concentrate them here in summary form.

1. Unresolved issues: The "big picture"

Is the military configured to fight an "information-effects" led war?

Participants were concerned that rapidly evolving events and in-field learning, with the new emphasis on SSTRO and on "information effects" as the leading edge of war-winning, were outpacing the military's ability to fundamentally transform itself at the overall institutional level, with negative knock-on effects for what was now expected in the field versus the capabilities and resources that are in place. We return to the commander's concerns below. In big picture terms, participants noted two key challenges:

> *We are trained and equipped to fight wars. We aren't trained and equipped to keep us out of fighting wars.*

Institutionally and culturally, the priority is still on kinetic war-fighting skills. As noted in Part 1,[9] participants were concerned that the U.S. military is still heavily invested and organized for prevailing at the tactical level of major combat operations, and has not yet adapted to the prerequisites for information-centric engagement: "If you look at where the money goes, the money goes to those activities down in the bottom of the triangle [the tactical level]. We are training to do those things very well. That's the struggle. How do you lead the lion of government to start looking at maybe sacrificing a B2 bomber for something that is more geared to influencing and information?"

Effective IO timeframes and turnover: Competing priorities. As noted in Part 3, participants concurred that "time on the ground" is required to attain the necessary cultural and situational capability for prevailing in COIN/SSTRO, as well as to build relationships of trust with the population. And yet, this cycle for effective IO and informational effects seems to be out of synch with the much shorter schedule for force turnover. Discussions underscored the tensions between these two competing priorities. Force turnover is necessary. But the out-going force takes with it much practical and hard-won cultural and situational capability (which is difficult to fully convey in handover notes), as well as the social capital it has built up with the community. Experience has shown that force turnover can sometimes incur a strategic setback:

> *Within two weeks, they totally undid all of the good will...that had been built up over a year.*

> *I think about this a lot... In Afghanistan, we had Special Operations Forces working in a village for the better part of a year. They were very culturally attuned, spoke the language, and did not come in with heavy guns. They were replaced by a unit (of the) airborne division that came in full flack jackets, up-armored, very by-the-book tactical military force. And within two weeks they totally undid all the good will that the Special Operations Forces had built up over a year. They were different types of units, different visions, with different training. So not only did we have the timeframe, the rotational aspect, but we also had the different types of units. This is a huge deal, I think, for what we're talking about.*

Overall most participants concurred that force turnover requirements presented major challenges for the continuity of situational capability, and that differences in force posture created an "inconsistency in the messages that we project. One unit is interpreted in one manner, another in another manner. And this inconsistency brings problems and liabilities with winning and keeping hearts and minds."

9. See Framing Observation #6, as well as Boxes 2 and 3.

Who is in charge?

Participants universally agreed that clear policy guidance is essential for message discipline and the creation of a common vision of the informational effects required for strategic gains in COIN/SSTRO. Without such guidance, individual commanders are left to interpret and construct messages based on their own understandings of their particular locales – with predictable negative consequences for the overall coherence and continuity of effort, especially in a mosaic war. The concerns about "who is in charge" revolved around three core issues: Who is responsible for overall information cohesion across DIME? How do we work back up the chain to ensure message relevance? How do we avoid "information fratricide, especially given the GIE?"

Under DIME, who is responsible for the perceptions we want to get to at the squad level?

The worst thing that happens in American policy is the failure to impose message discipline.

We really need to look at the interagency process. We don't have the skills for crafting messages that we should.

Top down: Who is responsible for overall "message cohesion"?[10] Participants concurred that the responsibility for strategic message cohesion lay with the interagency and that coherence should emanate from the "top down." However, there were strong concerns that the essential DIME edifice and capabilities – that is, a coordinated USG effort, working outwards from a defined end-state and coherent information strategy – are not yet a reality: "We don't necessarily have the organization or the processes from the interagency down to the brigade level outlined very clearly and with resources." There was a real confusion over how all the USG pieces are meant to fit together: Who is in charge of defining the information strategy? Who is in charge of message coherence and discipline at the strategic level? and, How does that strategic vision make its way down to the tactical commander's level? Variations on these questions echoed across the workshop sessions:

> *Who in government is responsible for putting out or withholding the information needed to achieve our strategic objectives? DOD? NSC? Should the IO portion be done by the commander on the ground?*
>
> *Who is in charge of coordinating what the military is going to do, what the State Department is going to do, and what statements the President will make?*

10. The workshop was held as Karen Hughes was beginning her tenure as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy, and prior to the publication of JP 3-13 (Information Operations). As a consequence, the workshop debate presented here reflects the gap that both of these initiatives were designed to address (at the DOD and interagency levels).

> *Who is the person in charge of message discipline at the strategic [inter-agency] level? At the brigade level, the commander determines message discipline. ...[but] it is at the upper operational and strategic level that we lose clarity of who is responsible for message discipline and making sure that we reach our measures of effectiveness.*
>
> *The problem is that strategic direction hasn't gotten through the middle layers of bureaucracy down to the commander so he understands in unambiguous terms what he is expected to do. And in many cases, what we have done with COCOMs is we've defined our end-states very narrowly. Our end-states are 'Overthrow the regime. Catch a bad guy. Kill a bad guy.' And when you get into Iraq, once we've done that, now what do you do?*

Participants also noted, however, based on the Gaza case study, that even when all parts of a government are strongly on message, this does not guarantee control over the informational effects as they play out with adversarial audiences. (See Box 13.)

Box 13. All-of-government "message fusion" doesn't guarantee control over informational effects: Takeaways from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies

Cohesive interagency coordination can yield synchronization of the message, but not necessarily the effects. (Gaza pullout)

Some participants marveled at the seemingly cohesive effort of all parts of the Israeli government to synchronize their actions and messaging around the Gaza withdrawal – in terms of defined end-state, methods and means. This cohesion and discipline contributed to the remarkable success and ease of a highly sensitive operation. All Israeli political and military participants were "on message" to deny the Palestinians any possibility of claiming credit for the withdrawal, and this message dominated during the operation itself, which was notably absent of any Palestinian armed incidents (which would signal a "symbolic" attempt to take credit for compelling the withdrawal). However, as an SME noted, a poll taken some months after the withdrawal found that 84% of Palestinians believed that Israel had been compelled to leave because of the Palestinian resistance. The reasons for this are complex, but related in part to the evisceration of the PNA's political capital as well as the Israeli failure to continue their messaging after the pullout. The point, however, is that even though the Israelis initially sent a cohesive and credible message, they still could not enforce its longer-term resonance with the Palestinians.

Bottom up: Who is empowered to adjust "informational fire" to ensure message relevance? A senior military commander underlined the criticality of message relevance: "Absolutely, there is a need for message discipline. And there should be some repository of responsibility for messages on multiple levels to ensure that message discipline remains undistorted. However, rigid message discipline can lead to message failure. There has to at least be an equal measure of energy that is applied to message relevance. So you might have had your message, but if it wasn't the right message, discipline and compliance are not the order of the day. Revision is the order of the day." While accepting that revision for resonance is essential, participants were less sure about how this adjustment should happen and at what level. On the one hand, the need for flexibility and responsiveness suggests that local ad hoc adaptation is critical. On

the other hand, the imperative for overall message coherence across different audiences in different locales suggests that higher-order guidance may be needed, although that also compromises agility and timeliness. Participants also wondered whether in an info-centric war, those with the boots on the ground should be sending feedback up the chain of command to the policy level. We return to this issue in the "commander's challenges" below.

> *If it isn't the right message, discipline and compliance are not the order of the day. Revision is the order of the day.*

The potential for "information fratricide." Given the top-down, bottom-up conundrums, many workshop participants were concerned about the potential for "information fratricide" in the SSTRO environment. Some argued that a new governmental body was needed to give greater coherence to the informational dimensions of an all-USG effort: "We need a Director of IO in the U.S. Government, a super-cabinet official to direct efforts." Others, however, with a nod to past failed attempts at improved coordination, wondered whether this degree of inter-departmental "communication fusion" was likely anytime soon.[11] The workshop raised a number of critical observations relevant to the potential for "informational fratricide," given the complexities of different audiences and the inter-connected nature of the GIE. It is to this we now turn.

The challenge of different audiences, message spillover and credibility.

Credibility of Messaging (1). Can we expect to reach all critical audiences all the time, without sending mixed messages? As detailed in Part 3, different audiences require different messages tailored to their perspective and needs. But messaging overall, needs to be essentially the same to ensure coherence, consistency and credibility in today's information environment, and given SSTRO objectives. Is it possible to do both things – be the same, but different – effectively? Participants accepted that, theoretically, audience-specific messages should be developed and then crosschecked to ensure overall consistency and coherence. But in reality – given the diversity of audiences, narratives and viewpoints, some of which may be in open conflict with one another – this task is enormously complex and requires all-seeing capabilities. Many participants wondered whether it was even possible, and whether USG capabilities and coordination were up to the challenge.

Credibility of Messaging (2). The relationship between IO and PA in COIN/SSTRO/GIE. A related challenge for message consistency is the interconnectedness of the audiences that you are trying to "compel," "attract" and "inform." While IO is meant to "shape" and PA is meant to "inform," the GIE has eradicated the guarantee of an "iron fence," as today's domestic U.S. audiences are far more "plugged in" to the theater of operations, via multiple communication channels, than in previous

11. See footnote 10. Karen Hughes was sworn in as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy on 9 September 2005, two months prior the workshop. As a result, the impact of this new interagency office was not yet evident to most participants. Anecdotal reports from the field suggest that the effectiveness of this interagency effort is still a work in progress.

decades. This would seem to require new levels of transparency in foreign theaters. As a number of participants concurred: "You should never do or say anything that you don't want on the front page of some paper." At the same time, domestic statements made for political purposes at home can also find their way to the ears of the foreign indigenous population, causing detrimental informational effects (See Box 12 and Part 3). But beyond the spillover problem, the COIN/SSTRO environment poses its own large challenges when it comes to "degrees of transparency" between messages designed to "shape" (IO) versus those designed to "inform" (PA), given the imperative of building credibility with the foreign public audience. Inconsistencies in U.S. messaging can be grasped by its adversaries, and used to hollow out U.S. credibility in the eyes of the population. Many participants were looking for guidance on how to handle these conundrums. Some participants suggested that "there are different layers of the truth," and maybe this was the true art of today's information-led war. But three essential questions remained: (1) Does the new environment of COIN/SSTRO demand new levels of transparency in IO?; (2) What is the relationship between PA and IO in the info-centric war?; and, (3) Who is in charge of pulling this process together?

To me, this is the crux of the current IO conundrum: How do you tailor and convey messages to different and often contradictory audiences in today's information environment?

PA doesn't want IO in charge. And PA says we can't have IO working for us. Who is responsible for pulling this process together?

The central challenge for tuth within the COIN/SSTRO environment is the interconnectedness of the audiences you are trying to compel, to attract and to inform.

2. Commander's challenges

Most participants accepted that in today's rapidly evolving COIN/SSTRO environments, "the commander is his own IO [planner]," meaning that the commander needs to understand how to wage an information-led war, and to consider everything that he does from an informational effects perspective. But given these novel and expanding responsibilities, as well as the knowledge that tactical actions can incur strategic effects, many participants thought that commanders were not being provided with sufficient guidance, authority or capabilities in the manner needed to carry out their new writ. Concerns were voiced about policy and doctrinal gaps, procedural and capability issues, as well as basic human dilemmas.

Policy and doctrinal gaps

Operating without clear policy guidance? As discussed in Part 2, participants concurred that a clear policy framework outlining the political end-game and attendant information strategy is essential for defining the desired informational effects and

operations in SSTRO and COIN. They also noted, however, that this strategic framework was not always in place or clearly articulated at the operations level:

> *I've been in operations where policy was not specifically explicitly laid out, and you're left trying to figure out what policy is…*
>
> *We faced this problem in Kosovo. You would think that we would have had an aggressive information program in Kosovo, in Yugoslavia, in the Balkans coordinated with what we were doing in Bosnia and Croatia. But it never happened because there was never a defined policy that we received from above. We didn't even know how to handle the Kosovo Liberation Army. Were they fighters or were they terrorists? We couldn't even target them with messages, because we didn't know what the U.S. policy was.*
>
> *Many combatant commanders are struggling with exactly what the national policy is. In many cases they will come up with guidance even if none is formally given. And if actions are spontaneous, there may not be an IO plan in place…*

Participants were particularly disturbed by this gap from an "informational effects" perspective. If a commander's operations may incur second and third order informational effects, then he needs a clear understanding of the overall strategic endgame, and the strategic consequences of dealing with "that particular bad guy in this particular way." Participants were concerned that, in the absence of policy, commanders were "de facto creating strategic policy through our tactical and operational events" and that these may be creating unintended political effects. This, some argued, "may not be the best thing for the government and everyone else involved."

How all-seeing is the commander expected to be? Are higher order informational effects of tactical actions the commander's responsibility? Participants struggled with understanding the boundaries and limits of the commander's tasks and burdens in the asymmetric, informational battlespace. Participants concurred that the commander has a lot of latitude to effect the perceptual environment of the area in his control through things like force posture and community interaction, consistency of behavior, and having deeds match words. However, there was less certainty about the limits of his mandate in specific tactical operations, like when dealing with insurgents for example.[12] Some participants were adamant that a tactical commander's job is to follow orders:

> *A tactical commander is not going to decide whether or not he is going to go into that city or any other city.*

12. As noted in Parts 2 and 3 above, much of this discussion was sparked by the Jenin case study, and the strategic blowback that erupted from what appeared initially to be a straightforward tactical mission. (See Boxes 4, 7, and 8.)

> *As a tactical commander dealing with a local area like Jenin, I'm supposed to achieve the tactical ends assigned to me by my bosses. I'm not so sure that I have enough leeway to effect things on that higher, strategic level.*

But others disagreed: "If we assume that consideration of informational effects is now an essential part of the planning process for any tactical engagement, it doesn't make sense to choose a deliberate engagement in a symbolic-laden spot like the Jenin refugee camp. If your objective is to defeat the motivation for terrorism, choosing a showdown in Jenin is more akin to a recruiting tactic. In COIN, a target cannot be chosen for purely tactical military purposes." Others drew the parallel with Fallujah: "You are in a bit of a trick box. On one hand you have a nest of vipers that you want to wipe out and on the other hand it becomes impossible to wipe them out without essentially destroying the town and civilian lives, and creating great potential for strategic blowback…What are the long term strategic consequences in taking down a town like that?"

If your job as a commander of the IDF is to end suicide bombings emanating from Jenin, you have a pretty good idea that it is not a question of arresting or killing 15 guys, but rather of cutting out the motivation. But how do you do that?

"Informational effects" is not the plane on which many tactical commanders think.

Participants concurred that commanders need to be empowered with the understanding that they have a whole menu of different tactical choices, so that they do not feel compelled to default to the most kinetically expedient. But the complex questions arising from the new melding of the tactical and strategic levels of war in COIN/SSTRO (from an informational effects perspective) and the limits of the commander's writ and capabilities remained (see next section).

Procedural/capability issues

We're not confident that we have sufficient strategic vision and capability at the brigade and squad level to make the right choices. A number of participants expressed concern that the overall strategic vision of the end-state and information strategy, in all their complexities, were not making it down to the tactical level. As different participants stated:

> *I am very good at putting little red dots on people's programs and telling them we're going to do this. But if I don't understand the bigger aspects, then I am not going to have that comprehensive view at the tactical level, and I'm going to continue to win the battle and lose the war. So I need diplomacy. I need somebody who understands the second or third order effects of me going in and doing these things. How do I get that vision to the tactical level? You tell me; I don't know.*

You have to make choices… But you have to truly understand the culture that you're operating in. And that is a challenge for a brigade, a division or a corps because they don't necessarily have access to the appropriate level of detail.

At the tactical level…we don't necessarily have the skill sets or knowledge of how the interagency level has planned for the transition of a conflict from peace to combat operations to stability operations and back to peace again.

If I see an information liability or opportunity, do I exercise my own initiative, or should I check back up the chain of command to ensure no unintended second or third order strategic effects? Does that feedback loop exist? The commander is well placed to see when the policy from above is out-of-step with the ground truth. As a senior military commander noted: "If there is clear policy, then the military is there to implement it one way or another. If there's wrong policy, then the inconsistency will resonate in the presence of those who are conducting the work." But, some participants wondered what channels exist to provide feedback up the chain of command if, from a ground perspective a given task may risk wider strategic blowback, or new opportunities were arising:

We don't have the on-the-ground capability to be assured that we are making the right strategic choices.

The policymakers might ask the military to try to achieve some ends that are not reasonable. In my previous experience, we could actually go back and say, 'This doesn't make sense. It's not doable. We may get to Point B, but that doesn't achieve our stated ends.' But this has been one of the areas that has been troubling me, personally, for the last four years.

As the subordinate IO and PA officers, who do we go to when we see an opportunity at the tactical level for a strategic benefit? So that we can reinforce the message or change the message to be more agile, based on something that is happening in my area of operations?

There was some sense that information opportunities should be seized and acted upon at the tactical level, without sending it back up the chain of command for review, and that ad hoc was good because it allowed for responsiveness and flexibility. But this "seize the moment" perspective stands in tension with the seeming need to have full situational awareness of the possible second or third order strategic effects of tactical actions, especially as these may play out badly in a different locale within the theater (one that you are not in charge of or familiar with). It also sits uneasily with the seeming imperative for overall coherence in messaging – from the strategic down to the tactical levels – which would suggest the need to check back with higher ups before making unilateral messaging change decisions.

Overall, a senior military commander concurred that the issue of bottom-up input for message and policy adjustment was an unresolved issue: "There is a big debate about this: Do we simply take policies that are given to those responsible and try to explain them in ways that will create some support for them? Or should there be some input on the policy development process [by the implementers of the policy]?"

The complexity of the battlespace: How do we aggregate complexity back up the chain of command? Situational complexity in a mosaic war presents huge challenges for message coherence and effective IO. Different locales can be very diverse, and for the IO officer, understanding the complexity of each local environment, and then aggregating this up to the next level so that a commander can understand the overall IO picture is hugely challenging: "The complexity a sergeant or a lieutenant sees on the ground is difficult to convey up to staff officers, who must reallocate resources in a flexible and agile way, as an insurgent in a local area can do. And that is something that the commander has to account for in his risk factor. …. It requires extensive coordination, up, down, right and left to make sure you understand what you are doing." This point also relates to the IO capacity issue: "The lower you go, the fewer staff officers you have. So it becomes incredibly hard to achieve unity of effort and a common situational awareness." (See next dilemma).

Is there sufficient capability to sustain agile, 24/7 IO at lower tactical levels? Some participants expressed concern about the "lack of density" of IO staff at the more junior levels of the command structure: "At the lower levels, you have less and less density of IO, PA, Civil Affairs and PSYOP personnel." This was a concern given the all-seeing, 24 hour at-the-ready stance that is seemingly expected at the tactical level: "The staff will be challenged to react quickly and think through the different target audiences, as they are thinking about the tactical actions that they have to do, the mission at hand… You have less capability to do the necessary information [prequel and] sequel and set the conditions for the next operation." As participants agreed, strategic information effects at the tactical level requires a deep understanding of the culture, the history, the local social and political networks and their interconnections to regional and global networks, as well as "where you are inserting yourself into the process, and the baggage everyone is carrying around." These knowledge challenges are compounded by a lack of confidence that the correct strategic vision has filtered down to the tactical level (as noted previously). Using the example of responding effectively to rumors, a participant noted: "We don't have sufficient clarity of information for the people who have to put the response message together, to "return the fire." Nor do we have the organizational process in place to ensure that we have that clarity. We leave it up to a lot of people who are doing their best. But…the lower levels are greatly challenged by the variety of tasks that they are now responsible for."

It is difficult to aggregate complexity at the operational level.

Basra is greatly different than al-Anbar province.

In response to these concerns, a senior military commander offered that, it may not be an issue of staff capacity, but rather, the overall orientation of command: "Given that there is a limited number of operators/practitioners in the information discipline at a lower level, it is the mindset of the entire command that will determine their usefulness or their inadequacies. The essence of an operation, especially in stability operations, is information-centric. And that is a completely different approach… If your essence is one of recognizing that everything you do is of interest and can be put into the information conduit all the time, then it is a process, not a manpower issue." Clearly participants were still struggling with how exactly such a transformation at the tactical level was to be effected, given that the larger organizational support issues seem to be lacking.

Is there sufficient cultural capability at the tactical level? Most participants thought the military was lacking in cultural capability overall, and especially down at the ground level where it really counts: "We are broke when it comes to culture. We don't understand it, and are clearly mirror imaging. We need to get on board with culture. But how do we fix this? Who is the cultural guru for the military?" One participant, while accepting that cultural capability was perhaps not sufficient for all regions in the world, argued that the FAOs were supposed to be advising commanders and IO planning group cells on culture: "Do we have this capacity at the level were it needs to be? Probably not. But there is an element out there designed to assist you." Overall, the lack of sufficient capacity was seen as a major dilemma, given its critical importance for reaching the population.

When security requirements contradict the overall strategic messaging about our objectives in the eyes of the population, what can a commander do? (Mixed messaging in a mixed COIN/SSTRO environment.) A tactical commander and his soldiers face the people on the street. But, asked one participant, what happens when U.S. strategic messaging doesn't agree with what people see and experience: "For instance, the U.S. says, 'we are here to help establish this and reestablish that.' But what the people see you doing is going around clearing out houses, searching ambulances, patting women down at checkpoints, and stuff like that." Everybody acknowledged that the insurgents are well placed to spin the informational effects of such action in a way that resonates with the people's experience: "The insurgents are saying that is because you are disrespecting them or you are trying to hurt them." But participants were at a loss as to how to conduct necessary security measures in a way that did not alienate the population. They were skeptical that messaging alone – "we're doing this because your neighbors have been smuggling explosives under women's dresses" – was stronger than the person's actual, physical experience of being stopped and body-searched. Some thought that respectful soldiers could help to some degree. But others noted that language barriers and soldier jumpiness during tense times at checkpoints or night house raids worked against conveying a softer posture.

On a related topic, participants also noted, based on the Israeli-Palestinian case studies, that strategic messaging which does not match the soldier's own experience (e.g., "you are a liberator" when your actions and people's reactions make you feel like an occupier) can also hollow out soldiers' morale in the longer term. (See Box 14 on the next page.)

Human dilemmas

Bringing the boys back home. In the mixed COIN/SSTRO environment, do you take own force risks to "send the right message" (we are there to help and protect you) to the population? From a "hearts and minds" perspective, soft hats and respectful, trusting behavior at checkpoints should be the order of the day. But is that realistic to expect in a COIN environment? Some participants with recent field experience thought not: "Put yourself in the Jenin tactical commanders situation…and think about what the U.S. military is doing right now. [The commander] has objectives, and he is going to accomplish them, but he wants to keep as many of his troops as safe as possible. Is he thinking about the long term? Is he thinking: 'Five years from now, how is the teenage boy that we're roughing up going to behave? Are we going to turn him into a terrorist?' No, he is not thinking long-term. He is

> *The tactical commander is not thinking long-term. He is thinking about achieving his objectives and brining his troops home.*

Box 14. Soldiers' morale: Takeaway from the Israeli-Palestinian case studies

When a campaign's strategic narrative contradicts the observed realities of the soldiers on the ground, it can hollow out the army's morale (Operation Defensive Shield).

ODS (and subsequent campaigns) was intended to dismantle the Palestinian militant's infrastructure of terror and deter or destroy the will and capacity of militant actors and their supporters. This is what the soldiers were told they were doing. The ways and means required re-occupation of Palestinian population centers, as well as harsh civilian strictures and controls. As the re-occupation wore on, it greatly stretched IDF capacities, as evidenced by eroding soldier skills, declining training standards and increasing morale issues amongst IDF soldiers serving in the territories. As some of the case-study readings pointed out:

- *"The problem with an operation like this is that it is like shaking a tree, maybe the people you're looking for fall out, but so do a lot of innocent people. By shaking them, by disrupting their lives, you're creating the next set of problems." (IDF Soldier in Anderson).*
- *"In our tactical decisions, we are operating contrary to our strategic interests. It increases hatred for Israel and strengthens the terror organizations," IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon (2003)*
- *"The degree of despair within Palestinian society has reached a peak since the fighting began in September 2000…When there are no solutions, Islam is the solution…Right now Hamas is the only organization that provides welfare and sustenance to the population, in light of the distress created by the security restraints Israel has imposed," Maj. Gen Yosef Mishlav, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (2003)*

Experiences on the ground suggested that the kinetic-focused ways and means for ending and deterring terrorism – which was to root out the insurgents physically and punish the supporting populations – was in fact strengthening support for the resistance, and even terrorist tactics. For soldiers tasked with carrying out the mission, the messaging dissonance fed morale problems.

thinking about achieving the tactical objectives and keeping the troops safe to bring them home. It is exactly what we are doing today. We have to think about it a lot when we send military units into an operation and put them in an AOR for 12 months. That commander is not thinking about how these actions are going to play out in the hearts and minds five or ten years from now. He is thinking about his tactical objectives and bringing his troops home. He doesn't care what happens 14 months after he is gone."

Accepting casualties for IO effects? In theory, most participants accepted that the essence of a tactical operation in COIN/SSTRO should be information centric. However, many did not think that the U.S. military was organized or functioning in this way yet. A senior military commander, stressing the need to be thinking about combat operations for the sake of pursuing information value, asked: "Are you willing to put someone's life at risk in terms of selecting a mission that will involve physical risk, perhaps the loss of life, for the sake of information? That may sound heretical for a General to say, but I submit to you that the absence of such a view is what often leads us to miss opportunities."

Are you willing to put someone's life at risk for the sake of information effects?

On a related front, discussion of the Jenin case study illuminated what can happen after own force losses: force protection takes priority, ROE may break down, and excess civilian casualties result. For the Israelis, the result was an information debacle with stiff strategic consequences. (See Box 10.) Participants concurred that this dynamic occurs all the time: "When you take enough casualties, it changes your view about what is ethical and the scope of tactics that are acceptable. And that has a profound impact on the IO strategy itself." Yet the harsh response sends the message that your own protection is more important than the protection of the local population, which incurs a strategic informational loss. The best that can be done after the fact is damage control, although rational explanations of why civilian deaths occurred are unlikely to have much resonance. Participants emphasized that from a strategic informational effects perspective, own force restraint is absolutely critical. But is that realistic to expect of your soldiers or your commanders in high-risk situations?

3. The "really big picture": Is it possible to export Western "values"? And what is the role of information and messaging in this process?

Some participants wondered about the "really big picture" in which they were participating: Is it possible to export Western value systems and their institutional edifices to another society in a way that actually takes root? And what is the role of information and messaging in this process? Two core challenges were discussed: Western-style democracy is easy to "sell" but hard to actually create and sustain in foreign cultures; and, what happens when cultural values clash?

Some participants thought that the target audiences in SSTRO are getting mixed messages when it comes to creating democracy and freedom. On the one hand, we say we are bringing democracy and freedom, and we point to indicators of success – like holding elections – to say that the "forms" of democratic organization are taking root. On the other hand, the people's actual experience suggests that the process of creating functioning democratic institutions requires much more profound socio-political transformations than simply lining up to cast a ballot. As one participant noted: "One of the mixed messages that Muslims get is [around] this process called democracy. It is all very well to hold elections. But this is presented to a Western audience as though just because you hold elections you are a democracy. But we all know it is much more than that. Many Muslims wonder what the point of having elections is if there are no meaningful institutions to back them up."

Unlike building a bridge or a sewer system, there is no blueprint for large-scale social engineering in different cultural and political contexts. And the path to the desired end-state – stability, democracy and freedom – is neither clear, nor guaranteed. Part of this problem is a timeframe issue (with such transformations requiring decades, perhaps even generational change), which has important implications for the length of time the "exporter" of the values intends to have boots on the ground to facilitate the end-state. On a more profound level, it is an issue of how cultural and social change happens, and whether outsiders can control the direction of change. As a number of participants pointed out, there are different cultural understandings of what "freedom" means and what it looks like, and these alternative viewpoints can be both valid and deeply ingrained in different cultures. A few also argued that "You cannot impose democracy. Unless the changes comes from the inside – their path to change – it isn't going to last." But how to get inside that different mindset, and understand it sufficiently to help it blossom in a way that leads the country to sustainable stability and reconstruction remained a puzzle for most participants.

On a slightly different track, participants wondered what to do when one of your allies in COIN/SSTRO has quite different cultural norms than you do – say with respect to the status of women in Afghanistan. As one participant asked: "Do you try to encourage them to change?" Some participants, while recognizing that you cannot simply impose different values and norms, also thought it important that the U.S. stays on message with its values: "If we have certain national values [such as] human rights…you cannot back off and say, it is okay if you don't agree with us. These values are the foundation of our government and our…policies. I don't think you can ever back off of those. You may not be able to force it down people's throats, but maybe it should be one of those recurring, persistent messages that you are always going after." Some thought that core values should be "a major issue that IO should address right up front," that is knowing

You cannot impose democracy. Unless change comes from the inside, it is not going to last.

IO needs to know how much of our own culture we are trying to export.

how much of your own culture you are trying to export to the foreign culture, and what parts are okay to "neutralize." And others wondered, when it comes to "backing off" certain issues, how does that sit with the purpose of the mission: "Isn't that why we're over there to begin with?"

Other participants, however, brought up the issue of "change from within" and the challenge of timeframes and realistic goals: "Just like everything else we have talked about, some things take time. That culture has been like that forever. And we want to impose our culture on Afghanistan? It can't happen." Overall on the "really big picture," participants had more questions than answers.

Appendix A. Workshop methodology

Case studies and small group work

The workshop's objectives were two-fold: to challenge participants to think "outside the box" on IO issues relevant to ongoing U.S. and coalition missions, while not limiting that discussion due to security constraints or sensitivities; and, to prompt as much inter-participant dialogue as possible. To accomplish these objectives, the workshop used a proven methodology – case study discussions and small group work – previously used by the Cambridge Security Seminar and the Center for Strategic Leadership.[1]

Workshop discussions were grounded in three case studies drawn from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (the second Intifada phase), which focused on IO and informational effects in COIN at the tactical, campaign and strategic levels. The retroactive case studies allowed for freer discussion of relevant issues, challenges and concerns. Discussion time was maximized by dividing participants into three parallel working groups, each of which discussed the three case-studies, assisted by group facilitators and SMEs. Candid contributions were encouraged by holding the workshop under the "Chatham House Rule."[2]

In advance of the workshop, participants received briefing binders consisting of case study reading materials, analytical memos, and a series of questions that highlighted key dilemmas and challenges. The workshop itself was conducted over a three day period and was executed in four phases:

a) **Introductory briefings,** which set out the workshop objectives, themes and identified key challenges and general questions for discussion;

b) **Case study briefings by SMEs** (on the Battle of Jenin, Operation Defensive Shield, and the Gaza Disengagement), which ensured that participants were "read in" to the main details of the case studies;

c) **Three parallel working sessions, each focused on one of the three case studies.** The small groups rotated through the three facilitated working sessions, so that each group discussed all three case studies by the end. Discussions were guided by the pre-assigned questions, which were designed to probe more general issues beyond the specifics of the Israeli-Palestinian context. In all cases, discussions built outwards to engage issues of core concern in current theaters of operation. At the conclusion of the workshop sessions, group spokespersons prepared briefs outlining the key findings of each discussion;

d) **Outbriefing and final plenary with senior DOD and interagency leadership.** The findings of each group were presented to a panel of senior DOD and

1. http://www.cambridgesecurity.net/project-css.html
2. "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the 'Chatham House Rule', participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed." See, http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/index.php?id=14

interagency leaders, who were video-conferenced into the final plenary session. In the discussion that followed, key observations were debated, including the differences among the working group perspectives.

The workshop was recorded, and transcripts prepared for each working session. Transcripts were subsequently analyzed and, together with the outbriefings and facilitator notes, synthesized into a full workshop report, as well as an abridged version.

Appendix B. Workshop case studies

Workshop case study #1.

The al-Aqsa Intifada/Operation Defensive Shield – operational (campaign) dimensions of IO in COIN

Overview

The following provides a bare bones overview of the complex dynamics of the al Aqsa Intifada and the IDF's campaign of response, and specifically Operation Defensive Shield (ODS). Participants are strongly urged to refer to the recommended readings, (at least Mitchell Report Excerpt and Hammes, Chapter 9).

Al Aqsa Intifada and Operation Defensive Shield – a brief background

September 2000 marked the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada, sparked by Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount (site of the al-Aqsa mosque). The following day confrontations between unarmed Palestinian protesters throwing stones and Israeli police using rubber bullets and live ammunition resulted in four Palestinians shot dead, 200 injured and 14 Israeli policemen injured. From there, *"what began as a series of confrontations between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli security forces, which resulted in the Government of Israel's initial restrictions on the movement of people and goods in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (closures), has since evolved into a wider array of violent actions and responses,"* (Mitchell Report, 2001). Unlike the first Intifada, whose enduring image was Palestinian youth throwing stones at tanks and soldiers, the al-Aqsa uprising largely involved "adult, male, armed and partially uniformed" Palestinian fighters (Hammes). The violence of both the Palestinian "resistance" and Israeli responses spiraled on for over four years, until January 2005. While all statistics in terms of deaths and injuries are contested, this episode of the conflict has left somewhere around 3,850 Palestinians dead and between 27-53,000 injured, and 985 Israelis dead, and between 5-7,000 injured.[1]

The most infamous "tactic" of the Palestinian Intifada, was the suicide bomber who targeted Israeli citizens in Israel proper. This method was initially the preserve of Islamist groups (with an average of 2.6 attacks per month during the first 14 months of the Intifada). After January 2002, however, the conflict entered a far more violent and dangerous phase when militant groups linked to the Palestinian secular organizations (e.g., the Fatah al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigades) joined the suicide campaigns, and a deadly competition ensued over which groups could execute the largest number of suicide attacks, and so claim enhanced political authority within the Palestinian political

1. Numbers of dead taken from Middle East Policy Institute, Nov 2005. Range of numbers of injured from different Israeli and Palestinian sources, as captured in Journal of Palestine Studies, Winter 2005, page 98. MEPI states that converting the death figures to U.S. population equivalents are: 293,226 Palestinians dead; and 46,406 Israelis dead.

landscape of resistance to the Occupation.[2] By September 2004, the total number of suicide bombings had reached 135, killing at least 501 Israelis and injuring some 2,823.[3] Eight of these attacks had been carried out by women.

Suicide bombs had a devastating psychological effect in Israel, inciting fear and galvanizing popular opinion in favor of decisive IDF action against the militant groups. In the discourse of the Palestinian street, however, suicide bombers became "martyrs," honored for their bravery and a symbol of the resistance. Placards and posters of every new martyr plastered the walls in all Palestinian towns and villages. Websites operated by militant groups and their supporters circulated photographs of martyrs.

On the Israeli side, the Intifada was met with general military engagements, actions to close off and contain Palestinian population centers (with increasingly formidable military force), and the targeted assassinations of political figures and suspected militant leaders. By September 2004, some 273-372 Palestinian "targets" had been successfully taken out, which also resulted in the death of some 300 civilian bystanders. The IDF also undertook some 19 Cabinet-approved operations in the West Bank and Gaza, ranging from air strikes on the offices and infrastructure of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and militant targets, to the reoccupation and sealing off of the Palestinian towns and villages that had been handed over to the authority of the PNA during the Oslo peace process. Related measures included curfews, house demolitions, land clearances and confiscation, and mass arrests. A more detailed look at one of these campaigns – the 2002 Operation Defensive Shield – follows.

Interpretations vary as to the "strategic" nature of the al-Aqsa uprising and its militarized dimensions. Israeli sources tend to assume a unified Palestinian strategy, orchestrated by the PNA and specifically designed by President Arafat to pressure the Israelis to make territorial concessions. Israeli sources highlight the financial support that Arafat was said to provide to the militant Palestinian groups involved, including payments to the families for suicide bombers. However, other sources knowledgeable of the dynamics of Palestinian politics and society emphasize that Arafat's authority over the militant groups was limited. His support for the militant groups was an attempt to capitalize on events, and thus, they believe, was an indication of the weakness his authority rather than a measure of his real power.

In addition, a "top-down" perspective that focuses only on Arafat's maneuvering ignores the deeper pressures and motivations that led to widespread Palestinian support for the uprising. Thus, some seven years after the Declaration of Principles in 1993, which was supposed to result in peace and prosperity for both peoples, and the Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), "per capita income levels in the OPT were estimated to be about 10 percent below their pre-Oslo level [and] despite considerable external assistance living standards were lower than before the process began. Aggravating the political situation were continuing Israeli policies of land and water confiscation, settlement expansion, movement restrictions, and numerous violations of important elements of signed agreements with the Palestinian Authority."[4] By 2000, the number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank had doubled

2. Hoffman (2004). *Terrorism Signaling and Suicide Attack*.
3. Journal of Palestine Studies (2005). Page 108.

reaching some 200,000 (excluding Jerusalem) with settlements connected by special "settler-only" bypass roads, that further constricted and cut-off Palestinian living space and movement around the West Bank.

In early 2005, following the death of Arafat and a changing political landscape, President Mahmoud Abbas declared an end to the Intifada. To date, while the level of violence has decreased dramatically, low-level attacks (shootings, rocket attacks, and occasional suicide bombs) continue, usually in lockstep with Israeli targeted killings, arrests of militant actors and closures of Palestinian towns and cities.

ODS and IDF intent (March-May 2002)

In March-April 2002, the IDF launched ODS, one of a series of campaigns designed to break the back of the al-Aqsa Intifada and the largest IDF operation in the West Bank since 1967. The stated objective was to isolate Arafat (who had been restricted to his compound in Ramallah since the end of 2001), to dismantle the Palestinian militant's "infrastructure of terror" and to deter or destroy the will and capacity of militant actors and their supporters. As IDF Chief of Staff Ya'alon declared: "The only solution [to the al-Aqsa Intifada] is to achieve an unequivocal victory over the Palestinians."[5] The campaign saw the IDF reoccupy Palestinian villages and cities that had been ceded to the PNA under the terms of the Oslo agreement (Areas "A"), namely Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jenin Camp, Nablus, Qalqilya and Tulkaram (and other smaller villages and camps).[6] The implicit IO intent was to deter any further support to the al Aqsa Intifada by "beating the Palestinians badly," and "teaching them a lesson." The campaign employed all measures of national power: an increased tempo of targeted killings of militants, house demolitions (in reprisal for support to suicide bombers or to clear areas for specific engagements), and land expropriation (for security zones), restrictions on movements between areas of the West Bank (checkpoints, closure and curfews), deliberate destruction of PNA infrastructure, mass arrests of the male population, and "filtration" of militants. Palestinian mass media – which were seen as fueling the Intifada, were singled out – radio and TV stations where destroyed, materials and documents seized. While ODS was a deliberate time-bound campaign, its objectives were open-ended, and continued over the next years in a succession of follow-on campaigns. As for ODS itself, it was ended prematurely, as international pressure mounted on the Israelis, following the Battle of Jenin. (See Case Study #2).

Tactical outcomes – Objectives mostly achieved

ODS was only partially successful in meeting its objectives. From a military perspective, the IDF succeeded in its immediate objective of establishing security compliance and control over all of the West Bank, including those areas previously under full

4. See, Ajluni (2003). Note that the Palestinian Authority was also guilty of violations. See Mitchell (2001).
5. The April 2002 deliberate engagement at Jenin was part of ODS.
6. The stated goals of the operation (as conveyed to the Israeli Knesset by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on April 8, 2002) were to "enter cities and villages which have become havens for terrorists; to catch and arrest terrorists and, primarily, their dispatchers and those who finance and support them; to confiscate weapons intended to be used against Israeli citizens; to expose and destroy terrorist facilities and explosives, laboratories, weapons production factories and secret installations. The orders are clear: target and paralyze anyone who takes up weapons and tries to oppose our troops, resists them or endanger them; and to avoid harming the civilian population."

Palestinian authority. The campaign also succeeded in partially suppressing the armed insurrection in the West Bank, notably the number of open skirmishes, attacks on the IDF presence in the West Bank, as well as against Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Some 4,258 West Bank Palestinians, mostly male, were detained, 216 killed and 416 wounded. (The IDF had 29 killed, and 127 wounded). However ODS did not achieve its intended outcome of "total victory" over the Intifada.

Strategic outcomes – Objectives compromised by negative informational effects

ODS did not put an end to support for the Intifada, nor did it succeed in dismantling the "infrastructure of terror" or significantly degrading the capability of militant cells. In the month following ODS, the number of suicide bombings in Israel was back to the same level as it was before the operation. Moreover, the military successes gained under ODS incurred high collaterals in terms of negative informational effects amongst the Palestinians, as well as global audiences. Arguably, the strategy of re-occupation and disempowerment of the PNA contributed to the further empowerment of a much more radical adversary, Hamas, which by January 2006 was elected into office by the Palestinian people.

From a material point of view, ODS rendered the populations of the West Bank entirely dependent on Israeli military authorities and international donor handouts. The material damage caused by the reoccupation of Palestinian cities was high (estimated at $360 million, almost all of which was eventually rebuilt with international donor funding). Moreover, the rigid system of check-points, curfews and closures restricted the movement of all Palestinians (including militants), effectively shutting down the West Bank and rendering a large portion of the population dependent on donor handouts (relief).

The destruction of the PNA weakened the sense of security at the local level. Power devolved from the PNA and civil authorities down to the "street," where the vacuum was partially filed by Islamic charities associated with Hamas and other groups. These groups provided a vital social safety net for affected populations, while militant groups increasingly began to fill the "public security" role previously played by the official PNA security forces and police. Targeted killings also had a mixed result. While they eliminated many of the senior military and political leaders of militant groups, by thinning out these ranks (which included political leaders who favored dialogue with Israel), it devolved power downwards in some of these groups to the level of radicalized cells, which were less willing to negotiate and far more prone to unilateral acts of terror.

Far from dividing the militants from the population, ODS created informational effects that further empowered the militants. The political evisceration of the PNA hollowed out public support for its strategy of pursuing a negotiated settlement with the Israelis, while garnering additional public support for the Hamas approach (violent resistance) in the eyes of much of the Arab world and the populations of the West Bank and Gaza. The effects were evident everywhere: Palestinians cities were plastered with the posters of the "martyrs," who were seen as "heroes" who had dared to resist the brutal reoccupation. Coverage of ODS in the Arab media was extensive, with the

story shaped to emphasize the brutality, arbitrariness, and deliberate "humiliation" and destruction (e.g., the October 2000 "Mohammed Durra" incident). Civilian suffering during the operation drew them closer to the resistance and their methods. Physical reoccupation and limitations on movement caused by curfews and closures also led to the unexpected collateral effect of spawning a mini "information revolution" in the Palestinian territories. Internet usage rose exponentially as did the use of cell phones, video conferencing and other commutations technologies. Moreover, these technologies and channels were effectively put to use by all Palestinian groups to convey the "brutality" of the occupation. And Hamas, in particular, has become very adapt at using the Internet for political messaging, coordination and communications, at time holding mass "rallies" in Internet chat rooms – thus effectively taking the "fight" out of the operational realm of the IDF.

Finally, on an overall political level, partially as a result of the consequences of ODS, Hamas grew in strength and popularity, a fact confirmed by the January 2006 elections when Hamas beat out Fatah for control of the democratically-elected government.

Beyond these effects within the Palestinian political landscape, ODS and subsequent campaigns that dragged on for more than a year created negative effects within the IDF, in the form of eroding solider skills, declining training standards, and increasing morale issues among soldiers serving in the territories – a fact acknowledged by the former IDF Chief of Staff Ya'alon, who was previously a strong advocate for the use of force "to send a message."

ODS summary from an information effects perspective

IDF Assumptions:

- Ending the Intifada required the re-imposition of IDF military authority over the West Bank and full freedom to operate to disrupt and dismantle the "infrastructure of terror" which was understood to be supported by the PA.
- The use of was to be deliberate and overwhelming to achieve "total victory" and establish a strong deterrent and "demonstration effect" against militant actors, and those supporting them. By "beating them badly," the IDF assumed it would put an end the Intifada.

End State:

Tactical/operational (campaign):

- Reoccupation of Areas "A", re-establishment of full IDF security responsibility and control over the Palestinian territories of the West Bank.
- Severe degrading of the Palestinian Authority's authority, including the capacity of the legitimate security forces. Partial breakdown of civil order (street actors gaining de facto power).
- Elimination (targeted killing) of senior-most leaders of the militant groups

(including political leadership of Hamas) as well as many lower-level suspected militants, and the arrest of thousands of others.

- Fragmentation of militant groups (emergence of cellular structure).
- Increased tempo of asymmetric activities: increased Qassam rocket launches from Gaza, and, no significant reduction in tempo of suicide operations.

Strategic:

- Further popular empowerment of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) as strategic competitors to the PLO.
- Inability of IDF to prevail ('total victory'), strengthening of radical Islamic and militant actors, weakened position of secular actors and those willing to take the negotiations route.
- Weakening of core IDF capabilities and morale.

IO Implications:

- **International audience I (U.S.).** Initially, the IDF successfully links ODS to the broader "anti-terrorist" war, part of the U.S. GWOT, and is allowed virtual freedom of operation to act as it deems necessary for national security in the Palestinian territories. (Hammes' argument). However, this tacit support comes to a crashing halt after the Battle of Jenin. (See Case Study #2.)
- **International audience II (Arab and European).** Significant and highly compelling international reporting, accompanied by circulation of images and video by formal and informal (NGO) media and the Internet create "symbolic icons" that legitimate Palestine "resistance" to what is graphically portrayed as a "brutal" and "excessive" reoccupation. (Some Arab satellite channels run continuous coverage of what one U.S. commentator described as "the 'greatest hits' of the Israeli Palestinian conflict – continuous footage of "Israelis soldiers kicking, punching and shooting Palestinians.") This creates difficult public relations problem for the IDF – which looses the IO initiative and is forced to be reactive.
- **Palestinian audience.** Hamas and PIJ, and their strategy of militant resistance, gain popularity and legitimacy among population. Overall radicalization of Palestinian politics (some merging of Islamist opposition with the global Jihad movement).

Recommended readings

Anderson, (2002). *An Impossible Occupation*

Catignani. (2005). *Strategic Impasse in Low-Intensity Conflicts. Gap Between Israeli Strategy and Tactics*

Hammes. (2004). *Sling and the Stone*. (Chapter 9 – *The al-Aqsa Intifada)*

Jones, (2003). *One Size Fits All. Israel, Intelligence and the al-Aqsa Intifada*

Kershner, (2005). *Peacetime in Jenin*

Milton-Edwards, (2004). *Elusive Ingredient: Hamas*

Mitchell Report. (2001). Excerpt on Background to the al-Aqsa Intifada (esp. pp 3-5)

Moghdam, (2003). *Palestinian Suicide Terrorism: Motivations and Organizational Aspects.*

Ya'alon Interview Newspaper Clippings: COS Ya'alon and Maj Gen Mishlav interviews – 2003 (pp. 1-3)

Discussion questions

What are appropriate ways and means to influence the indigenous population in an insurgency? Specifically, what is the appropriate balance between hard (physical destruction) and soft power in that regard? Can you "compel" hearts and minds? How do you deal with the liabilities of a "negative IO" campaign in a 4th Generation Warfare (4GW) environment? What kind of intelligence capacity (and structure) is required to provide an accurate contextual understanding of the operating environment (and audiences), and shape an appropriate response in a 4GW environment **(Theme 1, Tactical Means, Strategic Ends. Theme 2. Boundaries Between Military and Political Responsibilities).**

Examples/elaboration: What is the balance between the need for kinetic and non-kinetic means in order to influence? How do kinetic military operations support or limit the capability to obtain HUMINT from the population in order to defeat insurgents?; e.g., key factor in winning an insurgency is creating an environment where the population willingly turns in insurgents. Extracts from readings:

- *"Force is the only thing they understand*." (IDF Soldier in Anderson)
- "*The problem with an operation like this is that it is like shaking a tree, maybe the people you're looking for fall out, but so do a lot of innocent people. By shaking them, by disrupting their lives, you're creating the next set of problems*." (IDF Soldier in Anderson).
- "*In our tactical decisions, we are operating contrary to our strategic interests. It increases hatred for Israel and strengthens the terror organizations."* COS Moshe Ya'alon (2003) *(Newspaper Clippings).*
- "*The degree of despair within Palestinian society has reached a peak since the fighting began in September 2000…When there are no solutions, Islam is the solution…Right now Hamas is the only organization that provides welfare and sustenance to the population, in light of the distress created by the security restraints Israel has imposed."* Maj. Gen Yosef Mishlav, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (2003) (*Newspaper Clippings*).

Supporting readings: Anderson, pp. 4, 8, & 9; Hammes, ch. 9; Ya'alon Interview Newspaper Clippings; Catignani; Jones; Moghdam

If insurgents are deeply embedded in the fabric of local communities, bound by ties of kin, clan and politics, and provide support to the

indigenous population (security, schools, infrastructure, etc.) how do you win the population's "hearts and minds" when your military goal is to destroy these same insurgents? **(Theme 3. Definitions and Categories; and Theme 2. Military and Political Responsibilities)**

Facilitator examples/elaboration: A characteristic of insurgents is to provide essential services to indigenous populations. How does the U.S. empower the indigenous government to put down an insurgency while co-opting the insurgents to their side? Or can they? Should you negotiate with insurgents or does that legitimize them? What is the importance of understanding the underlying motivations of the insurgent in ensuring strategic success? How do you modify those motivations in support of strategic goals?...or can you? According to Catignani, page 15: "Palestinians measure success not in how much they help their people but in how much suffering they inflict on the Israelis…so success is minimizing my casualties…and the enemy's casualties." By contrast, Israelis top military brass – not known for their "soft" stance on the Palestinian issue – publicly declared in 2003 that the Israeli response was creating despair and hatred amongst the Palestinians, had undermined the PNA and had lent growing support to Hamas. (See interview quotes in Question 1 above.)

Supporting Readings: Catignani, p. 15; Milton-Edwards; Jones; Kershner; Ya'alon Interview Newspaper Clippings; Moghdam

What kinds of efforts are required to influence or modify the motivational attraction of "terrorism" generationally?

Facilitator examples/elaboration: How do you change a "culture of death"? Four elements to explore: i. Education. Changing beliefs is a long-term effort that begins with the education of children. Reading example: "martyrs/heroes, pictures of children in fighters garb." ii. Underlying Conditions. The National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism lists an objective of "win the war of ideas" under "addressing the underlying conditions."[7] iii. Collateral effects from own force operations. In a protracted, urban-based counterinsurgency campaign, do necessary tactical operations – cordon and search, use of force, nighttime raids, arrests, house searches, filtration of civilians, closures, curfews, mass arrests – possibly reinforce "generational" motivation to join the resistance? Can military tactics overwhelm "positive" SSTRO efforts (civil action, and community development work). iv. Political engagement with militant organizations. Is there a role for political accommodation? Can political engagement potentially lead to longer-term socio-political transformation?

Supporting Readings: Anderson, pp. 7 & 8; Moghadam, pp. 74 & 76; Milton-Edwards

7. Recommend reading page 23 of the Strategy (Google the strategy on the web), which specifically talks to the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

Workshop case study # 2.

The battle of JENIN: Tactical level of IO in COIN

Overview

IDF intent

The April 2002 Operation in the Jenin refugee camp was part of the ODS campaign. Jenin provides a textbook example of a deliberate engagement intended to disrupt the insurgency's "center of gravity" (COG) by eliminating a major node of the "infrastructure of terror" in the West Bank (between October 2000 and April 2002, Israeli sources claim that 28 suicide attacks were planned and launched from the Jenin camp). The Jenin operation had defined objectives to specifically target known militants operating out of the camp (estimated at over 200, belonging to four different and competing groups). The operation was "intelligence-led" and employed innovative concepts including the use of inorganic task forces, and non-linear swarming tactics. The operation was deemed a total tactical success in terms of achieving its immediate objectives.

From an IO perspective, the message that was intended for the Palestinians was: "We are not afraid to go into the refugee camps, and we will get you wherever you are." The strategic intent was to send a message of deterrence to the Palestinian resistance fighters, in an effort to stem the tide of suicide bombers. Messaging to the international audience, explaining the rationale for the move as well as the humanitarian efforts that were in place to protect civilians was neglected. The IDF did not think it necessary to message, given the operation took place six months after 9/11. In Israeli eyes, the ODS campaign overall was part of the global war on terrorism; they assumed, therefore, that international support was fully behind them.

Tactical outcomes of the battle: Physical win

Tactically, the battle of Jenin achieved its objectives, namely, seizing the camp, killing some 28 suspected militants and arresting others from four different groups (Hamas [al Qassam brigades], Palestinian Islamic Jihad, al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Tanzim), and eliminating the militants' infrastructure in the camp.

Unintended strategic outcomes: Loss due to negative informational effects

From an informational and strategic effects perspective, Jenin represented a strategic loss. The longer-term goal – to reduce the incidence of militant actions and suicide bombers directed against Israeli targets – was not achieved. In the three years following Jenin, the militant attacks of all four militant groups continued. Moreover, the Jenin "resistance" scored an important symbolic victory, by holding off the IDF for a significant duration (10 days) while also inflicting high casualties (23 IDF soldiers

killed, including 13 in a single ambush). Indeed, the 'heroism" of the Jenin resistance has been incorporated into the Palestinian national and resistance narratives, with special significance for bolstering the appeal of the Islamic groupings. The operation, therefore, incurred negative informational effects in terms of further empowering the Palestinian resistance. Jenin, now more than ever, remains a symbolic COG for the resistance.

The battle also proved to be an major strategic setback for the IDF on the global scene, as (false) accusations that the IDF had committed a massacre in the refugee camp blazoned across newspaper headlines, which led to a withdrawal of U.S. support for the IDF's overall campaign (Operation Defensive Shield). Following an ambush where 13 Israeli soldiers were killed, the IDF changed its tactics and force protection became top priority. Bulldozers were brought in to clear large sections of the camp, and in the more aggressive assaults that followed, civilians were killed. External observers perceived the destruction of the camp to be disproportionate initially, leading to loud public outcry from international actors (including the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], the United Nations [UN] and NGO community), the Palestinians, the Israeli left and the media, and claims that a massacre and other war crimes had been committed. While the accusation of massacre later proved false (some 58 Palestinians had been killed, some half of whom were civilians) the damage had been done. And regardless, the intensity of IDF operations caused highly visible civilian effects (handicapped bulldozed in their homes, ambulances destroyed, death of detained persons, civilians used as human shields, etc.), some of which were labeled as "war crimes" by an Israeli human rights group.

Overall, tactical success came at the expense of the IDF yielding the "moral high ground," while also likely bolstering the moral authority of the resistance/insurgency in the eyes of the wider Palestinian population. For the IDF, the Battle of Jenin was a significant strategic defeat, from an informational effects perspective.

Battle of Jenin summary from an information effects perspective

IDF assumptions:

- Targeting the "Infrastructure of Terror" will eliminate the insurgent's capacity to act.
- Deliberate use of overwhelming force will create a deterrent "demonstration effect," as prospective militants will see that resistance is futile and that no space is safe, not even the refugee camps.

End state:

Tactical:

- Destruction of large sections of the Jenin refugee camp (150 homes and buildings destroyed).
- Elimination or arrest of significant number of known/suspected militants. (Some 200 militants thought to be operating from Jenin).
- Short term reduction in the number of suicide operations originating from Jenin camp (short term dismantlement of "infrastructure of terror").

Strategic:

- IDF loses "moral high ground" in its "war on terror" via accusation of war crimes, reports by credible organizations of IDF human rights abuses against civilians (Human Rights Watch [HRW]); Israel comes under external pressure to end its ODS campaign.
- Symbolic "victory" by militants (casualties inflicted on the IDF, capacity to "hold out" for 10 full days against the superior IDF).
- Camp reconstructed by international donors.
- Jenin remains a center of insurgency (2005), with "motivational" level of insurgency seemingly enhanced rather than reduced.

Informational effects:

- **International audience:** Israel looses "moral high ground" and is accused of excessive use of force, and "war crimes" (UN, HRW).
- **Insurgent audience:** Jenin becomes an enduring symbol of heroic Palestinian and Islamic resistance (symbolic motivating factor for the insurgency).
- **Wider Palestinian audience**: Jenin becomes further "proof" of Israel's indiscriminate and brutal methods against Palestinian people, homes and community. And for many, the "heroism" of the resistance, in the face of markedly superior firepower, wins the moral high ground (with increased tacit support for militants).

Recommended reading:

B'Tselem, (2002). *Operation Defensive Shield*. Pages 12-14 (Jenin – House Demolitions)

Catignani, Sergio. (2005). *The Strategic Impasse in Low-Intensity Conflicts: The Gap Between Israeli Counter-Insurgency Strategy and Tactics during the al-Aqsa Intifada*. The Journal of Strategic Studies, Vol 28, No. 1 (Especially pp. 63-66)

Goodman & Cummings. (2003). *The Battle for Jenin: A Case Study in Israel's Communication Strategy*. Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, January 2003. (Especially pp. 15-22, and 45-54).

Horowitz. Mark D. (2004). *ROE - Are We Falling Victim to the Enemy's Effects Based Operations"?* Naval War College, February 2004.

Jenin The Capital of the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists, (Israeli Intelligence document TR2-302-02 (IDF/MI) subsequently released by Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S), http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/jenin/jenin_e.htm

Jones, Clive. (2003). *"One Size Fits All: Israel, Intelligence and the al-Aqsa Intifada*. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism (Esp. pages 281-282).

Discussion questions

Rumors, misinformation and disinformation can create long-lasting perceptions amongst different audiences (in the Jenin case, the main audiences affected were the wider international audience, the regional audiences, and the domestic Palestinian audiences). How do you counter misinformation reactively? How can you prevent it proactively? How must counter-information strategies be adapted to resonate with different audiences (international, regional, local)? Can you mitigate the effects of insurgents leveraging the disinformation to win both international sympathy and more recruits? **(Theme Four: Operating Environment and Wild Cards. Media, Audiences and Effects.)**

Examples/elaboration: Once the "genie is out of the bottle" you can't get her back in. Example: Jenin was widely rumored to be a massacre. It wasn't but once reported many would not believe anything else. How to control NGO reporting from the field; the media (embrace or exclude); the media (images and ensuring our pictures get equal coverage); the media ("influencing" a market driven media).

Supporting readings: Goodman, pp. 18-20; Anderson, pp. 10-11.

What impact do strict or loose interpretations of the "law of war" (and ROE) have on perceptions of fairness and legitimacy of military actions in the eyes of the local population, as well as wider audiences? How do you communicate the ROE to the local population? How do you ensure that a local population understands the rationale for a military operation, given the necessity of maintaining OPSEC (which requires withholding information). Is it possible to convince a local population that an external military operation *is* appropriate, necessary and in their own interests? After own-force losses – with fear and anger amongst the troops – how do you ensure continued adherence to ROE at both the level of command and the level of the individual soldier? What is the IO cost of having ROE slip in the heat of battle**? (Theme One: Tactical Means and Strategic Ends)**

Facilitator examples/elaboration: Policy drives tactical considerations here. Is it legal to bulldoze family homes? To bomb or fire into a mosque? If there are cases where it is, how do you get the indigenous population to understand that without revealing upcoming operations?

Supporting readings: Goodman, p. 21 and pp. 45-49; Horowitz; Catignani; B'Tselem – House Demolitions.

How do you ensure that tactical requirements, successes or mistakes do not lead to strategic setbacks, especially when mission requirements (and their intended and unintended consequences) may be perceived negatively by national and international audiences (including the "hearts and minds" of the wider local audience)? (**Theme One: Tactical Means and Strategic Ends**).

Facilitator examples/elaboration: Ambulance inspections/strip searches at checkpoints (requirements); bulldozing homes in Jenin ("success"). Shooting kids throwing rocks (mistake). Note that these examples of tactical requirements and successes may reduce militant attacks in the shorter term, but cause Israel to become international pariahs. Also it remains a question as to whether these means quell terror in the longer term – a question that is also explored in the Operation Defensive Shield session.

Supporting readings: Goodman, p. 19; Anderson p. 11; Catagnani

Workshop case study # 3.

The Gaza disengagement: Strategic dimensions of IO in COIN

Overview

Israeli government/IDF intent

The "Gaza disengagement" was a strategic decision taken by Israeli Prime Minster Ariel Sharon in 2003 – to reconsolidate Israel into "defensible borders" by unilaterally withdrawing Israeli settlements and military presence from the occupied territory of the Gaza Strip. The objective of the disengagement – which occurred outside of the formal "road map for peace" process[8] – was to regain the initiative and allow Israel to unilaterally (preemptively) re-draw its borders in accordance with its national security priorities without negotiation, while preserving both domestic and international support (especially U.S. support and approval). The actual withdrawal (disengagement) was completed in August-September 2005.

The disengagement was prompted by heavy U.S. pressure placed on Israel (and the Palestinians) to end the cycle of violence that began with the al Aqsa Intifada (2000), and which had led to the full re-occupation of the West Bank by the IDF in 2002. A second, equally important, but less discussed reason for the disengagement was a growing discontent within the IDF over the policy of occupation, which was seriously stretching and eroding the capabilities of the security and defense establishment. The stress on personnel – particularly in the Border police and security forces (Shin Bet) – and the reduced capability in the IDF (due to a decline in training brought about by continuous deployment in the territories) was of growing concern. There was evidence of declining morale, including an increase in the number of soldiers refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories (conscientious objectors), including amongst elite units (notably the helicopter pilots tasked with "targeted killings," and Signal Intelligence personnel). A third reason, which Prime Minister Sharon did not openly disclose, was his belief that "the international community will repay Israel by being more supportive of Israeli territorial claims [i.e., the settlement blocks] in parts of the West Bank."[9]

The disengagement process itself was primarily a strategic political operation, in which the IDF was deployed in an important supporting role. The overall Israeli "explanation" (hasbara) of the disengagement (including the choice of name, i.e., "unilateral

8. In 2003, after heavy U.S. pressure, the Israeli and Palestinian authorities agreed to the "Road Map" to end the violence and the conflict (proposed by the "Quartet" of U.S., Russia, EU and UN). The Road Map committed Palestinians and Israelis to a cessation of violence, withdrawal of IDF from occupied areas (Areas "A"), cessation of settlement expansion, reform of the Palestinian security forces (and their commitment to combat "terrorism"), and a reaffirmation to pursue a negotiated settlement of the conflict, leading to an independent Palestinian State in the West Bank and Gaza.

9. See, Susser (2005): "Evidence for [this belief] came in April of last year, when Sharon secured a letter from President Bush stating that in a final peace agreement 'new realities on the ground including already existing major Israeli population centers' should be taken into account." This represented a fundamental shift in U.S. policy.

disengagement" as opposed to "withdrawal") was constructed as a campaign of strategic communication that employed government spokesmen, networks of think-tanks, and political groups and synagogues. The plan took two years to construct, partially due to intense domestic opposition from pro-settler groups and their supporters who saw the withdrawal of settlements from Gaza as a betrayal of a Zionist bequest.[10] In this phase of the preparation for disengagement, the IDF played no significant role, except for defining a legal/strategic position vis-à-vis Gaza in the post-disengagement phase. In that respect, while the IDF was to reposition its forces to Israel proper, it would retain full sovereignty over Gaza's borders, sea and airspace, and would reserve the right to conduct military and security operations within the territory of Gaza.

Once the decision to disengage had been made and a timetable established (August 2005), the IDF was assigned a two-fold role: (a) to support the evacuation of the settlements and provide security for the orderly withdrawal (which included the demolition of the former settlement sites); and, (b) to secure the "unilateral" nature of the disengagement, and ensure the withdrawal could not be claimed as a "victory" by Palestinian militants (as had happened with the Hezbollah after Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon).

The Gaza disengagement was a complex political-military operation for the IDF, which was accompanied by differentiated yet functionally integrated information campaigns aimed at the domestic Israeli audience, the international community, and the Palestinians. For the domestic audience, (including the IDF itself), the disengagement was messaged as necessary to the fundamental security of Israel, and as a tough decision that Israel was making on its own terms – for itself, by itself. Yet, the knowledge that many of the Jewish settlers would resist the orders to leave – and would have to be forcibly removed from their homes – required careful tactical preparation, to ensure that the soldiers were sensitive in the use of force and that there would be no chance of violence erupting between the IDF and the settlers. For the Palestinians, the messaging was to deny militants from claiming victory – to ensure that the population understood that this was a unilateral Israeli choice, intended to enhance Israeli national security and "not about you." The lead up to the disengagement was preceded by an increased tempo of security operations against Palestinian militant groups, particularly Hamas and Islamic Jihad who are the de facto authority in the Gaza strip. The IDF was deployed in an aggressive stance and clearly "messaged" their intent to use force to pre-empt any attempt by Palestinian groups to capitalize on the withdrawal through symbolic attacks. To the international community, the intended message was to prove Israel's commitment to the peace process, highlight the "sacrifices" it was willing to make, regain the moral high ground, and not to be seen as having negotiated a withdrawal with "terrorists."

10. Sharon's ability to successfully deal with the domestic critics was linked to three factors: (1) long-standing and at times majority public support for getting rid of the "cesspit" of Gaza; (2) Sharon's long-standing and tough stances on security – if he thought it would be good for Israeli security, then it must be; and, (3) his role as the "Father of the Settlements." Perhaps Sharon was the only person with the legitimacy to declare this particular settlement offspring as dead.

Strategic outcome: A mixed picture

The disengagement was completed effectively and rapidly in August – September 2005, with minimum use of force or violence. The IDF used overwhelming numbers of unarmed personnel to remove settlers, and contain anti-withdrawal protesters (over 50,000 troops were deployed, the largest IDF operation in Israel since the 1973 war). Effective international support and engagement with the Palestinians (brokered by U.S. General William Ward's mission) allowed for "coordination" with the Palestinians to take place without direct negotiation, and ensured that Palestinian militants did not interfere with the withdrawal. In the end, the only violence to occur was perpetrated by an IDF soldier who killed 18 Israeli-Palestinians in an attack on a bus (in protest of the withdrawal).

From an international strategic perspective, the Gaza withdrawal shifted the "information battle" back to the high-ground for Israel, and allowed the political leadership and IDF to seize the initiative and dictate the terms in this stage of the Palestinian endgame. The "success" of the disengagement enshrined the notion of a unilaterally imposed settlement of "defensible borders" as an acceptable solution (setting a precedent for future action). Moreover, the strategic "messaging" of the disengagement – the emotional character of the abandoned synagogues (which were deliberately not dismantled by the IDF) being looted and burned by Palestinians – "messaged" the difficulty and existential pain of withdrawing from territories, as well as the "irresponsibility" of ceding land to the Palestinians in expectation that this would bring "peace." Subsequent events suggest these information effects, as well as the effectiveness of the disengagement "messaging" itself, may have shifted in Israel's favor the basis for the final settling of Israel's borders in the West Bank.

The immediate strategic outcome of the disengagement can be deemed a success, and a good example of a coordinated, multi-audience, information-led, strategic "effects-based" operation. However, the Israeli efforts to ensure that Palestinian armed groupings did not claim credit for the withdrawal did not win out in the end. Rather, the unilateral withdrawal created informational effects within the Palestinian political landscape, which eventually further empowered Hamas, and its strategy of violent resistance, within the eyes of the population. Thus, by not allowing President Abbas to claim any credit for the withdrawal, Israeli messaging further undermined public support for the PNA and the strategy of pursuing peace through negotiations with Israel. This left Hamas free to spin the "informational effects," which it did successfully in the wake of the Israeli retreat, claiming that its resistance activities had compelled the Israelis to leave. Significantly, recent polls find some 84% of Palestinians believe the Israelis left due to the pressures of armed resistance.

As of this writing (November 2005) it is too soon to judge whether Israel's unilateral strategy and non-engagement with the Palestinians will led to sustainable security and the quieting down of Gaza, or fuel further militancy. It is illuminating to note, however, the continuing unrest and lack of security that persists along Israel's northern border following its unilateral withdrawal from South Lebanon.

Gaza disengagement: Summary from an information effects perspective

Israeli government/IDF assumptions:

- Cost of continued tempo of IDF operations in the occupied territories was eroding Israel's strategic position, including political support from key international actors (U.S. and Europe), a degrading of capabilities in the IDF and security forces, economic decline and domestic dissent and unrest.
- Current "kinetic" approach to dealing with Palestinian unrest was potentially counter-productive, leading to radicalization of Palestinian politics and growth rather than decline of militant actors.
- Imperative to de-escalate the conflict, and regain the initiative in "explaining" the conflict, and its endgame, and regain the moral high ground.
- Necessity to address specific "messages" to multiple audiences (domestic, international, Palestinian) in a coordinated, comprehensive and consistent manner. (Coordinated, all government, information-led approach.)
- Imperative to ensure that "disengagement" is unilateral – and not capitalized upon by Palestinian actors as a "symbolic victory."

(Interim) End-state:

Tactical:

- Palestinian militants "deterred" through effective third party engagement, from capitalizing on the withdrawal as a "symbolic victory" for the "resistance" during the operation itself
- IDF use of force remained credible in the run up to the withdrawal, but actual use of force was kept at a minimum (IDF regains moral high ground).
- Overwhelming use of unarmed personnel, effective non-violent crowd control and maximum restraint prevented forced withdrawal of settlers from becoming violent, and promoting a national crisis.
- Settlements were effectively dismantled, with maximum informational effects gained in Western media, through strategic use to highlight "critical events" e.g., emotional pain of settlers; and the irresponsibility and lack of control exercised by Palestinians in burning and looting abandoned synagogues.

Strategic successes:

- Israel regains initiative and unilaterally imposes terms for redrawing state borders in favor of its national security – which is accepted and supported by the international community, despite being in contradiction with the formal "road map" process that calls for a "negotiated settlement."
- Established precedent for "unilateral" redrawing of "defensible borders" as a means to effect an internationally accepted end-state.
- Re-gained moral high ground for IDF/Israeli actions vis-a-vis the Palestinians in the eyes of the international community.

- Conducted a successful "effects-based operation" where IDF was integrated and played a supportive role in a coordinated all-government, multi-audience information and influence campaign (IO).

Negative informational/strategic effects within the Palestinian political landscape (from a winning the peace perspective):

- By not allowing President Abbas to claim any credit for the withdrawal effort, Israeli messaging further damaged the political credibility of the PNA, and de-legitimized the strategy of negotiation as a road to peace (in the eyes of the Palestinians).
- In the informational vacuum following the withdrawal, Hamas spun the informational effects and claimed the Israelis left due to armed resistance. This further increased the legitimacy of the strategy in the eyes of the Palestinian public.
- A recent poll suggests some 84% of the Palestinian population believe that the Israelis were compelled to leave by the force of Palestinian resistance. It is fair to surmise that these perceptions contributed, in part, to the Hamas electoral victory in January 2006.

Recommended reading

Clyde, Mark. (2005). *Israel's Proposal To Withdrawal from Gaza*, Congressional Research Service (2 February).

Eldar, Akiva. (2004). *The Failure of the Policy of Force*.

Hanley, Delinda. (2004). *Gaza Withdrawal: Implications for U.S. Middle East Policy*, The Washington Report on the Middle East, (June).Kifner, Jonathan. (2000). *Ice Cream and Bottle Rockets at Lebanon's Border Parade*, The New York Times, (3 July) p. A 1

Kreshner, Isabel. (2005). *Now the Ball is In Israel's Court, Says Al Aqsa Brigade Militia Leader Zakariya Zubeideh the morning after Disengagement*, The Jerusalem Report, (Sept 19).

Milton-Edwards, Beverly. (2005). *Gaza Withdrawal and the Security Quagmire*

Oren, Michael. (2005). *A Soldier's Story*, The Wall Street Journal, (23 August)

Steel, Jonathan. (2005). *The Settler's Retreat was the Theater of the Cynical*, The Guardian, (19 August)

Susser, Leslie. (2005). *Gaza, the Doomed Experiment*, The Jerusalem Report (Sept 19)

Discussion questions

If insurgency is a 'war of ideas' requiring a total inter-agency effort, should the military element of power fill the gap in order to influence the strategic outcome in the absence of strategic guidance or interagency involvement/ capacity? **(Theme 2. Military and Political Responsibilities)**

Facilitator examples/elaboration: What mechanisms must exist to coordinate communications across all government agencies? What bureaucratic processes or mechanisms hinder (or support) this coordination? Can they be changed? What strategic risks exist when such coordination does not occur? How does the military "fill the gap" lacking a USG communication strategy, especially in influencing long term behavior?" Is a regional approach necessary to effectively communicate the message? If so, how can that effectively be done given current interagency structures. If interagency effort is a requirement of strategic victory, but capacity and experience does not exist while the military is held accountable, what does that portend for military roles and missions? Is "defense support to public diplomacy" an example of this mission creep?

Supporting readings: Goodman, p. 30; Anderson, p. 15

How do you ensure consistency across "messaging" if different categories of audience (international, domestic, insurgent, civilian) require a different "message"? Is there a liability (potential blowback) in having an inconsistency between messaging to each audience (Compel vs. Attract)? What audience matters most? (If the endgame is to win the "battle for ideas" that are a strong "motivation" for insurgency.) How does the military support the political messaging effort while avoiding the stigma of "propaganda." **(Theme 2. Military and Political Responsibilities; and, Theme 4 Operating Environment and Wildcards.)**

Facilitator examples/elaboration: How do you coordinate messaging in a conflict environment that requires communication of the strategic "intent," to different audiences: international, domestic, regional, and "indigenous" (which includes the indigenous insurgents, broader civil institutions society, existing political leadership, citizens in their home and the "street")? How do you de-conflict "black" IO from "white" IO at the tactical and strategic level? How does the military plan to strategically influence in support of national objectives without being accused by the press and domestic public of conducting propaganda against U.S. citizens, especially in an information environment where the means (internet, satellite phones and TVs) are ubiquitous?

Appendix C. Workshop takeaways

Workshop discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian case studies produced a large number of reflections and observations across the different sessions. The most pertinent of these have been synthesized from across the workshop, to produce 13 "takeaways" of broader significance for information operations and effects in a COIN environment. Note that these takeaways do not necessarily embody a workshop consensus. They are grouped here under each of the case studies discussed: Operation Defensive Shield, the Battle of Jenin, and the Gaza Withdrawal. Readers are strongly urged to review the case study write-ups in Appendix B for essential background context.

Case Study #1: Operation Defensive Shield (campaign level)

Takeaway #1. Never assume you are on the moral high ground, and that you therefore don't need to message.

Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield six months after 9/11, and shortly after a Palestinian suicide bombing campaign inside Israel had killed 127 Israelis in one month alone. The Israelis assumed that their moves against Palestinian militant groups would be seen as part of the "war on terror," and would be perceived as legitimate by international audiences (particularly the U.S.). They neglected to undertake a strategic communication campaign oriented at the international community, whose objective should have been to underscore the "legitimacy" of Israeli actions, and advertise the efforts they were taking to minimize civilian casualties. As participants noted:

- *They thought is was not a huge jump to equate Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad with al-Qaeda…. Their expectation was 'now that the West has been attacked, it understands what we have been going through, and they will support us.'*
- *They didn't bother with an information campaign advertising their humanitarian efforts (to minimize civilian casualties during the Operation) to the larger international community, because they assumed that they held the moral high ground by [the] dint of 9/11.*

In the event, and especially after the blowback from the Battle of Jenin when accusations that the Israelis had committed a "massacre" and "war-crimes" gained widespread currency in the international media, Israel came under intense pressure to end its operations in the West Bank. On a broader note, participants concurred that it is imperative in this new global information environment to understand the "perceptual terrain" of the audiences that matter. How do **they** define the moral high ground? Never assume that just because what you think you are doing is right means that everyone else will perceive it that way. Strategic communication may or may not address this, but it will at least ensure that your message is clear and understood.

Takeaway #2. An intervening armed state tends to be seen as "Goliath" while non-state actors that resist are often cast as "Davids."

In the asymmetric battlespace, the perceived underdog tends to elicit sympathy, which can translate into a "hearts and minds" advantage. As one participant noted: "What you've got with most operations is a David and Goliath type situation… and the information advantage goes to the weaker side. I can't explain the dynamics of it, but we see it throughout history." This dynamic was clearly evident during the first Palestinian Intifada, when images of children throwing stones at Israeli tanks ceded the moral high ground to the Palestinians and brought international pressure to bear on Israel to enter a negotiated peace process with the PLO (which had formerly been labeled as a "terrorist" organization). During the second Intifada, the Palestinians lost their unambiguous "David" status in the eyes of the international community when they resorted to armed resistance and suicide bombings. However, during Operation Defensive Shield, when the Israeli military reoccupied Palestinian towns and villages and the pictures and stories of civilian casualties and hardships mounted, Israel was again susceptible to being cast as Goliath. With respect to the media's role, a number of participants concurred that the Western press tends to assume the mantle of "watch dog" when big, democratic powers (like Israel or the United States) undertake military action against weaker non-state opponents, and they see their role as ensuring that the nation's core values, like respect for human rights, are not violated in the process. Although no doubt some journalists are just pursuing a story that will make the headlines. As one participant stated: "A lot of these media guys think they are the next Woodward and Bernstein." So when things go wrong – like in the Battle of Jenin – there is a tendency to assume the worst and believe the rumors that "Goliath" has let loose on "David."

While participants had no clear solution to this dilemma, some suggested that the "Goliath" syndrome may be mitigated by a broad-based information campaign to advertise the efforts being undertaken to censure the safety of innocents, and to explain the rationale, in order to build legitimacy for the action and objectives, before, during and after the offensive.

Takeaway #3. Targeting insurgent leaders won't stop the resistance, and the resulting informational effects may fuel further radicalization.

While decapitating an insurgency may be intended to eliminate command and control and send a message of deterrence to future would-be leaders, this is not necessarily the informational effects that are created. When an insurgent commands a popular following for a political cause (like Palestinian groups and some of the insurgents in Iraq) degradation of his capability and authority, or killing him, may not have a deterrent effect. Rather, new leaders and groups inevitably step up, and they are often more radical than their predecessors. In addition, the initial killing creates informational effects that feed a narrative of revenge and more killing. This kinetic-informational dynamic renders an eventual political settlement more difficult. The Israeli case studies revealed two examples of this:

- **Operation Defensive Shield and the rise of Hamas**: The IDF used kinetics to degrade militant infrastructure, including the dismantling of the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus, and to capture or kill suspected militant group members. Part of the IO campaign was to isolate and humiliate Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in his headquarters, to "punish" the Palestinian Authority for its alleged support of terrorist incidents. But the resulting informational effects was the further hollowing out of the political authority of the Palestinian Authority in the eyes of the people, which gave further legitimacy to the more radical Islamic oppositional group Hamas, as well as their strategy of violent resistance.

- **Targeted killings of suspected "terrorist"/political leaders of Hamas:** Some of the Hamas political leaders that were assassinated (such as Ismail Abu Shanab) had previously signaled a willingness for political compromise and accommodation with Israel. By eliminating these leaders, the IDF eliminated potential negotiating partners, while also further radicalizing the militant groups, who undertook further suicide bombings and attacks to avenge the deaths. The strategic shortsightedness of the policy of targeted killings became more apparent when the center of gravity for Palestinian politics shifted to Hamas as the democratically-elected government. As a participant noted: "The Israelis killed off a lot of the opinion leaders in Hamas. That may work in the short-term but its not going to work in the longer-term. You have to engage those guys." Overall, participants concurred that "Israel's success in applying these kinds of kinetic means for dealing with terrorist activities has actually been rather unsuccessful."

Takeaway #4. Direct action against a threat may create positive informational effects at home, but negative informational effects in the COIN theater.

The decision to launch ODS was prompted by the large number of Israelis that had been killed by a Palestinian suicide bombing campaign. The Israeli government was under domestic political pressure to be seen to "do something" quickly to stop the attacks and lessen the fear factor. In that sense, ODS responded to domestic political needs: "the campaign resonated well with the domestic audience. One thing the military takes into account is the psychological impact on the Israeli citizens. There was a sign of relief: 'finally, our Government is doing something.'" However, the decision to reoccupy Palestinian cities and root out the terrorists created detrimental informational effects within the Palestinian population and political landscape from a "winning the peace" perspective, including: further radicalization of the Palestinian population who felt they were being collectively punished by the reoccupation; further emasculation of the Palestinian Authority both physically and symbolically which also hollowed out any remaining legitimacy for the Palestinian Authority's platform of negotiations as a strategy for ending the conflict (in the eyes of the people); and, further strengthening popular support for Hamas, and their platform of violent resistance.

A number of participants thought Israel probably considered the potential strategic liabilities, but decided in favor of the short-term, domestically-focused imperatives: "It looks as if the Israelis did take into account information operations planning and possible blow-back from it, but they may have weighed the risks and just said, you know, it is an acceptable risk. We will probably lose this at the tactical level, information-wise, with the Palestinians and potentially with the Islamic world. But that's an acceptable risk to eradicate the immediate threat of terrorists from killing our citizens." Others noted, however, that this gain was limited, as the suicide bombings did not cease after the campaign.

Takeaway #5. When a campaign's strategic narrative contradicts the observed realities of the soldiers on the ground, it can hollow out the army's morale.

ODS (and subsequent campaigns) was intended to dismantle the Palestinian militant's infrastructure of terror and deter or destroy the will and capacity of militant actors and their supporters. This is what the soldiers were told they were doing. The ways and means required re-occupation of Palestinian population centers, as well as harsh strictures and controls. As the re-occupation wore on, it greatly stretched IDF capacities, as evidenced by eroding soldier skills, declining training standards and increasing morale issues amongst IDF soldiers serving in the territories. As some of the case-study readings pointed out:

- *"The problem with an operation like this is that it is like shaking a tree, maybe the people you're looking for fall out, but so do a lot of innocent people. By shaking them, by disrupting their lives, you're creating the next set of problems." (IDF Soldier in Anderson).*
- *"In our tactical decisions, we are operating contrary to our strategic interests. It increases hatred for Israel and strengthens the terror organizations." COS Moshe Ya'alon (2003) (Newspaper Clippings).*
- *"The degree of despair within Palestinian society has reached a peak since the fighting began in September 2000…When there are no solutions, Islam is the solution…Right now Hamas is the only organization that provides welfare and sustenance to the population, in light of the distress created by the security restraints Israel has imposed." Maj. Gen Yosef Mishlav, Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (2003) (Newspaper Clippings).*

Experiences on the ground suggested that the kinetic-focused ways and means for ending and deterring terrorism – which was to root out the terrorists physically and punish the supporting populations – was in fact strengthening terrorism and support for the resistance. For soldiers tasked with carrying out the mission, the messaging dissonance fed morale problems.

Case Study #2: The battle of Jenin (tactical level)

Takeaway #6. Eliminating insurgents won't stop the resistance, or the terror tactics.

In the absence of a political strategy, capturing or killing insurgents does not deter the insurgency or terrorist tactics. It is fighting in the wrong battlespace. The kinetic encounter can create its own informational effects, which can feed the resistance narrative of the "martyrs," and strengthen the insurgent's appeal. This is especially so if the kinetic action has incurred collateral damage, which brings the people closer to the insurgents.

The Israeli intent was to stop the wave of terrorist attacks by apprehending or eliminating suspected terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp, dismantling the "infrastructure of terror" and deterring future terrorists by sending the message to Palestinian audiences that "we're not afraid to go into the refugee camps. We'll get you wherever you are." The Israelis backed up their IO message with credible action, with a tactical plan that drove the militants into the refugee camp, to ensure they were eliminated or captured there (some 58 Palestinians were killed, although half were thought to be civilians). In terms of effects, however, the "deterrent" message to the Palestinian militants, and the local population that supported or at least acquiesced to them, was drowned out by three factors, which turned the Information War to the advantage of the Palestinian resistance fighters. First, the relatively large number of IDF casualties (23 killed, including 13 in a single ambush) served to confirm the "heroism" of the outgunned Palestinian fighters (in their own eyes) because they managed to hold off the full armored might of the IDF for 10 days. Second, both the civilian casualties, as well as the physical destruction of large parts of the refugee camp (which the Israelis undertook with bulldozers for tactical purposes) served to reinforce the idea of the immoral and illegitimate Israeli oppressor in the eyes of the Palestinian street. Third, Jenin itself has strong symbolic resonance in the cultural history of the Palestinians – as a city with a long history of resistance to foreign occupiers, and the birthplace of the 1930s resistance leader Izzidin al-Qassam, from whom the current Islamist Izzidin al-Qassam brigades have taken their name.

All of these factors worked to turn the Battle of Jenin into a symbolic victory for the Palestinian fighters, and especially, the members of the Islamic resistance, as the story of Jenin 2003 became incorporated into Palestinian nationalist and resistance narratives. The informational effects, therefore, was neither to cease the flow of recruits to these organizations, nor to put an end to suicide bombings inside Israel. In the three years after the operation, the militant attacks of all resistance groups targeted in Jenin have continued.

Takeaway #7. When it comes to rumors of war-fighting gone wrong, the first stories onto to the wire stick. Even if the stories later prove to be exaggerated or untrue, the damage to your reputation (and your moral legitimacy) is hard to erase.

IDF engagement in Jenin was bounded by clear ROE, with provisions to ensure the evacuation and safety of civilians. However, especially after the deaths of 13 soldiers in one engagement, actions were undertaken to prioritize the safety of the soldiers, with more aggressive attacks and the use of bulldozers to "clear" large sections of the camp. This led to civilian deaths, and images of seemingly mass destruction. The result was a loud public outcry from international actors, the Palestinians, the Israeli left, and the media, with some sources claiming that a massacre and other war crimes had been committed. The story was picked up and repeated in news media headlines. Although the accusation of a massacre later proved to be false, the damage had been done. Workshop participants concurred that once a sensationalist story makes headlines, it is hard to set it straight: "Once you are responding to rumors, forget it." The "buzz" and outrage about alleged Israeli actions in Jenin (against the backdrop of the GWOT in other theaters) resulted in international pressure for the Israelis to prematurely end the overall ODS campaign.

Takeaway #8. If you have truth to communicate, then do so before, during and after action.

In this GIE, Public Affairs around a military operation is as important to success as military IO. The Israelis undertook a lot of humanitarian planning around the Battle of Jenin, including IO and procedures to encourage civilians to leave the area, and coordination with the civil leadership of the city. But, they had no Public Affairs to advertise how they were conducting the operation to external audiences. As one participant observed: "It seems they didn't set the information environment so that everyone knew what measures they were taking to protect the people, and not to seem heavy-handed." By not getting this message out, before and during the battle, the Israelis were in no position to counter the rumors that a massacre was taking place once the fighting started to heat up. The information liability was particularly strong because of the symbolism of the refugee camp were the battle took place. One of the reasons why the Israelis didn't bother to message to external audiences is because they didn't trust the press, and therefore didn't engage them, and tried to keep them out. (See next point).

Takeaway #9. Even if you don't trust certain media, engage them. Restricting media gives an informational advantage to your adversary.

Given the GIE, you need to engage all media, even those you don't trust. The Israelis learned this the hard way as (untrue) rumors that they had committed a massacre in Jenin spread across Western headlines. The Israelis did not trust the foreign media and put heavy restrictions on their access to information and to the area of Jenin. The Palestinians, by contrast, fully engaged the media on a number of levels. On the

"popular" level, Palestinians living in and around the camp used new communications technologies to "get the story out." As one participant noted, "It was what we might call a media swarm as opposed to a media storm. The moment the IDF started coming close to Jenin you had cell phone networks among 400 NGOs in the area saying the IDF is in the area. When it was clear that they were going towards the refugee camp, then that buzz turned into pictures, as dozens of Palestinians with digital cameras took pictures and downloaded them by email. And the journalists were drawn to this buzz. The journalists weren't actually at the spot themselves, so they had to depend on these accounts and pictures for their story. And I think this is a major reason why there were huge distortions of fact about the scale of what was happening." On an official level, the Palestinian leadership also picked up on this buzz and declared that a massacre was taking place, and the pictures of the physical destruction were evidence that this could be true. Because the Israelis had created a "media vacuum" on their side, there was no counter-narrative or evidence, until after the rumors had made it into Western headlines. And by then, the damage was done. Participants concurred that even if you don't trust certain media, it is better to fully engage them and give them as much information and access as possible.

Takeaway #10. Western democracies have low tolerance for the moral ambiguities of kinetic actions. This is especially so when, in the heat of battle, mistakes or civilian casualties occur. Kinetic action that violates the law of war creates informational effects that decrease domestic and Western support.[1]

The accusation that the IDF had committed a "massacre" in Jenin proved to be false. However, following the loss of 13 soldiers in a single incident, the intensity of IDF operations increased, causing highly visible civilian effects that were labeled as war crimes by an the Israeli human rights group B'tselem (which cited violations such as bulldozing handicapped civilians in their homes, destroying ambulances, deaths of detained persons, civilians used as human shields). In particular, one soldier's seemingly callous behavior, willingly relayed in an after-action interview, drew much domestic attention and concern. B'tselem's accusations, in combination with the initial global outcry that civilians had been massacred, led to some loss of Israeli public support for the operation overall, despite high domestic motivation in light of the Palestinians' earlier suicide bombing campaign.

1. This takeaway was articulated by an SME, who also referenced the work of Merom (2003) on Why Democracies Lose Small Wars, which is based on the Israeli experience.

Case Study #3: Gaza withdrawal (strategic level)

Takeaway #11. Political messages that target domestic audiences can spillover to other audiences, and create detrimental informational effects in the COIN theater.

In order to secure domestic approval for the Gaza withdrawal, Prime Minister Sharon had to send a strong message to his people that this action was taken by Israel, for Israel and on Israel's terms. There would be no negotiation with the Palestinians because, according to Sharon, there was no "partner for peace" on the Palestinian side. In Israeli eyes, the Palestinian National Authority was no longer an acceptable partner. While this unilateralism played well with the domestic audience, it also created strategic informational effects within the Palestinian political landscape. As an SME explained, Sharon's unilateral moves further eviscerated the remaining shreds of legitimacy and authority of President Abbas, and his platform for a negotiated peace with Israel. Abbas was unable to claim any credit for the Israeli withdrawal. As one participant noted, "If Abbas had at least gotten a handshake, he could have said, 'Look, this is what we got through peaceful negotiations.'" But that is not what happened, and in the informational void that occurred after the pull-out (see Takeaway # 13 below), Hamas stepped in to fill the gap and claim the credit. The Hamas message was: "See, our strategy of armed resistance has worked. Through our efforts we have made the occupation too painful for the Israelis and they have left." The credibility and legitimacy of Hamas' means and strategy were seemingly vindicated, which contributed to their growing popular support and, arguably, to their electoral win in January 2006. From an overall strategic effects point of view, the Israeli domestic-centric messaging campaign, may well have contributed to the empowerment of a far more recalcitrant and radicalized adversary.

Takeaway #12. Cohesive interagency coordination can yield synchronization of the message, but not necessarily the effects.

Some participants marveled at the seemingly cohesive effort of all parts of the Israeli government to synchronize their actions and messaging around the Gaza withdrawal – in terms of defined end-state, methods and means – which contributed to the remarkable success and ease of the operation. All Israeli political and military participants were "on message" to deny the Palestinians any possibility of claiming credit for the withdrawal, and this message dominated during the operation itself, which was notably absent of any Palestinian armed incidents. However, as an SME noted, a poll taken some months after the withdrawal found that 84% of Palestinians believed that Israel had been compelled to leave because of the Palestinian resistance. The reasons for this are complex, but surely related to the evisceration of the PNA's political capital (see #11) as well as the Israeli failure to continue their messaging after the pullout (see #13). The point is, however, even though the Israelis initially sent a cohesive and credible message, they still could not enforce its longer-term resonance with the Palestinians.

Takeaway #13. Information Operations need to keep going, even after the physical action is over.

While noting Israel's success with containing Hamas from claiming a victory during the Gaza withdrawal itself (i.e., from claiming that armed actions had compelled the Israeli withdrawal), a number of participants thought the Israelis were remiss for not continuing their messaging drumbeat after the withdrawal. The Israelis stopped messaging, but the Palestinians didn't. And in the informational vacuum that followed the pull-out (see #11), there was no credible message to counter Hamas' claim that their resistance had made the Israelis leave: "The Israelis should have kept beating that message. Why is it that 84% of the people today believe that it was the armed factions that caused the withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip. Why is that?" The Hamas informational win had follow-on strategic effects, by bolstering the legitimacy and credibility of the strategy of armed resistance, and of Hamas itself, in the eyes of the people. By not continuing the drumbeat, one participant argued, the Israelis basically "just walked away…And so you end up with a baseline that says 84% believe this, and that the West Bank will be next." Overall, participants concurred that "we often stop talking about IO after the kinetics have stopped," but by so doing a physical win could be spun by adversaries into a strategic loss.

> *When the last guy comes across the border on the Gaza Strip, the Sharon's of this world need to continue with the messaging drumbeat.*

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Glossary

CMO	Civil-Military Operations
CNO	Computer Network Operations
COCOM	Combatant Command/Commander
COG	Center of Gravity
COE	Contemporary Operational Environment
COIN	counterinsurgency
DIME	Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic
DOD	Department of Defense
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
GIE	Global Information Environment
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IO	Information Operations
JPSE	Joint Psychological Operations Support Element
MOE	Measures of Effectiveness
MILDEC	Military Deception
ODS	Operation Defensive Shield
OPSEC	Operations Security
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territories
OSINT	Open Source Intelligence
PA	Public Affairs
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
POG	Psychological Operations Group (Airborne)
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review
ROE	Rules of Engagement
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
USSTRATCOM	United States Strategic Command
SME	subject matter expert
SSTRO	Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations
USA	United States Army
USG	United States Government

Prudens
Futuri