

# Influence Strategy: Consistency and Legitimacy as Key Factors

*Bryan Pickett, United State Air Force, USA*

*Mike Lingenfelter, United States Army, USA*

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## ABSTRACT

*The U.S. strategy in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as with al-Qaeda has focused predominantly on heavy U.S. military involvement (with a high proportion of kinetic operations), while using influence components (media, public diplomacy, Civil Affairs (CA), Military Information Support Operations (MISO), and Public Affairs (PA)), for the most part, in a reactive manner. This paper explores influence strategy and theory to identify what the key components of an effective influence strategy are, and how to modify these components to increase strategic effectiveness. First examined is the relationship of influence strategy with grand strategy, then progressed to examining several key influence theories as proposed by Cialdini, Ellul, Pratkanis, and Aronson, Tugwell, McLuhan, and Reilly. From the review, it appears that there are multiple descriptive formulations of the components of influence, but no specific formulations on how to develop an effective influence strategy using these principles. The principles of influence were compared and several hypotheses regarding an effective influence strategy proposed to help achieve the desired political end-state. The authors plan to test these hypotheses in future research using case studies of the Boer War, WWI, WWII, the Cold War, and the current conflict of U.S. versus trans-national Jihadi terrorists.*

*Keywords:* Influence, Narrative, Network, Social Network Analysis, Strategy, Terrorism

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## INTRODUCTION: STRATEGY AND INFLUENCE

The purpose of this paper is to explore influence strategy and theory to identify what the key components of an effective influence strategy are and how to modify these components, when necessary, to increase strategic effectiveness. “In a basic sense, strategy is the methodical art of relating ends and means to deal with other actors” (Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001, p. 348). The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) “acknowledges that victory...depends on information, perception, and how and what we communicate as much as application of kinetic effects” (Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 2006, pp. A-4-A-5). Yet, the U.S. strategy in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as with al-Qaeda globally has focused predominantly on heavy U.S. military involvement (with a high proportion of kinetic operations), while using influence components (media, public diplomacy, Civil Affairs (CA), Military Information Support Operations (MISO), and Public Affairs (PA)), for the most part, in a reactive manner. There seems to be no grand influence strategy by the U.S. to inform U.S. policy and

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current military operations. Grand strategy is the work done by a nation to “assess challenges, identify core interests, and set forth a long-term vision or intent that provides parameters for the development of a national security strategy and its attendant policy initiatives” (Brimley & Flourney, 2008, p. 6).

In this paper, we will begin by examining the relationship of influence strategy with grand strategy, then progress to examining several key influence theories as proposed by Cialdini, El-lul, Pratkanis and Aronson, Tugwell, McLuhan, and Reilly. From our review, it appears that there are multiple descriptive formulations of the components of influence, but no specific formulations on how to develop an effective influence strategy using these principles. Although the particular case study presented in this paper has a strong U.S. focus; the components of influence identified will also be applied to the trans-national jihadi narrative. Additionally, this paper serves the foundation for on-going research. Further case studies will be chosen for analysis, including case studies with limited or no U.S. involvement to ensure the influence components identified are just as applicable in a non-U.S. context of Information Operations.

## STRATEGY AND INFLUENCE

Liddell Hart (1975) stated that “nations do not wage war for war’s sake, but in pursuance of policy. The military objective is only the means to a political end” (Lykke, 1989, p. 351). Thus, military strategy in all cases is the “art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force or the threat of force” (JCS, 1987, p. 232). Now if “[s]trategy equals ends (objectives toward which one strives) plus ways (courses of action plus means (instruments by which some end can be achieved))” then what are the optimal military ways and means for achieving political ends (Lykke, 1989, p. 9)? In the past, military strategy often focused on the destruction of forces; however, this was required only as a necessary step to

ultimately reach the decision maker to achieve the political concession of those who controlled the military. The “QDR acknowledges that victory... depends on information, perception, and how and what we communicate as much as application of kinetic effects” (Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 2006, p. 230). This end is the same for the full spectrum of war, from potential conflict with nuclear powers to low-intensity conflicts: “Countering the ideological appeal of the terrorist network of networks is an important means to stem the flow of recruits into the ranks of terrorist organizations. As in the Cold War, victory will come only when the ideological motivation for the terrorists’ activities has been discredited and no longer holds the power to motivate streams of individuals” (The National Defense Strategy, 2005, p. 244).

Many believe that the goal is always the opposing political leader, the adversary’s decision making network, or war-making network; hence the debate during the birth of airpower over the concept of strategic paralysis. Strategic paralysis was conceived of as a third type of warfare which did not seek the destruction of enemy armed forces in battle via annihilation or attrition, but rather sought a strategy of bypassing battle with enemy forces in favor of attack upon the sustainment and control of those armed forces (reference Giulio Douhet, Billy Mitchell, J.F.C. Fuller, Hans Delbruck, B.H. Liddell Hart, Lord Trenchard, and Billy Mitchell for a more details both for and against this concept). This ultimately gave rise to the concept of strategic attack or strategic strike which is used to destroy the enemy’s center of gravity. Colonel John Warden proposed the existence of five rings or centers of gravity, with the most important one being leadership, followed by organic essentials, infrastructure, population, and finally the warfighting capability itself (i.e., the standing armies, navies, air forces, etc.) (Carlino, 2002). However, the true strategic center of gravity is the support (explicit or implicit) of any movement or political entity by the domestic population: “in the final analysis, the exercise of political power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population

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