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## Enhancing US Efforts to Inform, Influence, and Persuade

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Christopher Paul

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**ABSTRACT:** Capabilities to inform, influence, and persuade are necessary both for national security success and as a cost-effective toolset relative to physical military power. This article discusses shortfalls and deficiencies in this area, and concludes with recommendations to increase resources for manning and tools for informing, influencing, and persuading, as well as efforts to inculcate “communication mindedness” in commanders and senior leaders.

Asking for a second helping when everyone else is tightening their belts is awkward. Unfortunately, proponents for US government capabilities to inform, influence, and persuade are in just that position, as such capabilities have not yet fully matured nor are demands for their use fully satisfied. While a time of “belt-tightening” is undeniably upon us, we must find a way to support continued growth, development, and improvement in this area.

### Informing, Influencing, and Persuading

How US government representatives present and describe themselves to and engage and communicate with foreign audiences matters. The success of many policies is contingent on the support received from various populations whose perceptions are influenced by both what we do and what we say, which is particularly relevant for national security policy—for example, one of the greatest national security threats of our time is transnational terrorism and other forms of violent extremism. Efforts to combat violent extremism must consider the beliefs, motives, perceptions, and grievances that predicate extremism as well as those that lead to support for violence.<sup>1</sup> National security objectives are not necessarily well served when US forces kill or capture the members of a terrorist network if the perceptions and beliefs that motivated the terrorists and their supporters remain to generate a similar network in its place.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have starkly exposed the truth that some military objectives depend in large part on the behavior and attitudes of relevant civilian populations and cannot be achieved solely through the application of force.<sup>3</sup> As the

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1 See Christopher Paul and Elizabeth L. Petrun Sayers, “Assessing Against and Moving Past the ‘Funnel Model’ of Counterterrorism Communication,” *Defence Strategic Communication* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 27–41.

2 As then-Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates noted, “Over the long term, we cannot kill and capture our way to victory” over “terrorist networks and other extremists.” See Robert M. Gates U.S. Global Leadership Campaign (speech, Washington, DC, July 15, 2008), <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1262>.

3 For a contemporary example, see the observation that “the application of military force alone is not likely to defeat ISIS,” in David S. Sorenson, “Priming Strategic Communications: Countering the Appeal of ISIS,” *Parameters* 44, no. 3 (Autumn 2014): 25–36.

*Department of Defense Strategic Communication Science and Technology Plan* noted: “a compelling argument can be made today that the public perceptions and implications of military operations might increasingly outweigh the tangible benefits actually achieved from real combat on the battlefield.”<sup>4</sup>

Informing, influencing, and persuading go beyond traditional messaging to include a much wider range of capabilities that need to be coordinated because actions communicate.<sup>5</sup> Whether you think of it as minimizing the “say-do gap,” or wish to discuss the “diplomacy of deeds,” what we do matters at least as much if not more than what we say, which is especially important for deployed military forces.<sup>6</sup> Every action, utterance, message, image, and movement of a nation’s military forces influences the perceptions and opinions of the populations who witness them—both first hand in the area of operations and second or third hand elsewhere in the world.<sup>7</sup> The White House *National Framework for Strategic Communication* got it exactly right: “Every action that the United States Government takes sends a message.”<sup>8</sup>

If informing, influencing, and persuading are important, the United States needs not only the capabilities dedicated to communication and messaging, but also the means to coordinate policies, actions, and other sources of messages and signals to achieve desired objectives.<sup>9</sup>

### **Informing, Influencing, and Persuading Are Cost Effective**

Compared with other elements of national power, efforts to inform, influence, and persuade are relatively inexpensive and generally low-cost synergistic multipliers for applying other forms of power. There are two arguments to be made here: the preventative argument where informing, influencing, and persuading efforts help avoid the need for deploying more expensive capabilities because an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and the enabling argument where the combined arms application of information power along with other forms of power makes it easier, and thus less expensive, to accomplish missions.

Considering the first argument, imagine the savings that accrue when American efforts to inform, influence, and persuade are so successful preceding a prospective military operation (during phase 0, shape, in the six-phase joint operation construct) that the planned operation becomes unnecessary.<sup>10</sup> The costs of successful efforts to diminish support for violent extremism are reduced when the costs involved in hunting and

4 Defense Research and Engineering, Rapid Reaction Technology Office, *Strategic Communication Science and Technology Plan: Current Activities, Capability Gaps and Areas for Further Investment* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense [DoD], April 2009), 2.

5 See Christopher Paul, “‘Strategic Communication’ is Vague: Say What You Mean,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 56 (1st Quarter 2010): 10–13.

6 Defense Science Board, *Task Force on Strategic Communication* (Washington, DC: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, January 2008), 13; and Bruce Gregory, “Public Diplomacy and National Security: Lessons from the U.S. Experience,” *Small Wars Journal* (August 14, 2008): 6.

7 Todd C. Helmus, Christopher Paul, and Russell W. Glenn, *Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007), 171.

8 White House, *National Framework for Strategic Communication* (Washington, DC: White House, March 16, 2010), 3.

9 DoD, *Strategy for Operations in the Information Environment* (Washington, DC: DoD, June 2016).

10 US Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Joint Operations Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: JCS, August 11, 2011).

eliminating terrorists, including the human cost exacted by the terrorists and possibly lost to collateral damage, are not expended. Following the same logic, even if prevention is not possible, efforts to inform, influence, and persuade can modestly decrease the costs of, or threats to, other efforts by making an operating environment more permissive and conducive to desired end states before operations begin.

In addition to shaping the battlespace or preventing the need for full-fledged operations, a second argument insists the synergies from informing, influencing, and persuading alongside other military capabilities can reduce costs. Some operations require the support of indigenous constituencies in order to succeed and winning that support strictly through physical force and without employing influence capabilities is impossible or at least extremely costly. Occurring more often than we would like to think, this situation is one of the main drivers behind winning all the battles but losing the war.<sup>11</sup>

While easily imagined, making concrete cost-benefit calculations in support of either of these arguments and generating evidence for them is much harder.<sup>12</sup> Measuring the impact of efforts to inform, influence, and persuade remains a notable challenge, and counterfactuals (where something did not happen) are even harder to document rigorously.<sup>13</sup> Other research has used notional data to illustrate the possible cost savings from influence operations during military activities under a number of different scenarios and assumptions. The conclusion was the increased use of information operations in phase 0, phase 1, and phase 2 “should be worth the investment to avoid or delay the significantly higher costs of the remaining phases,” where the application of conventional forces costs orders of magnitude more than information operations.<sup>14</sup>

Firmly quantified or not, successful prophylactic action will be undeniably cheaper than resolving a contingency through deploying significant forces. Likewise, military operations or other forms of expense that are made easier or shorter when preceded or accompanied by effective influence will always yield savings, as inform, influence, and persuade activities are inexpensive relative to the costs associated with longer (or bloodier) operations.

## Improving US Capabilities to Inform, Influence, and Persuade

The past decade has seen a host of white papers, reports, articles, and commentaries suggesting reforms and improvements for US strategic communication and public diplomacy, two prominent categories of US efforts to inform, influence, and persuade. The ideas, conclusions, and recommendations of 36 of these reports were surveyed and compared in a 2009 RAND study, which found the documents often recommend

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11 Gina Cairns-McFeeters, John Shapiro, Steve Nettleton, Sonya Finley, and Daryk Zirkle, “Winning the Ground Battles but Losing the Information War,” *Small Wars Journal* (January 21, 2010).

12 On the difficulty of assessment and measurement in this area, see Amy Zalman, “Getting the Information Albatross off Our Back: Notes toward an Information-Savvy National Security Community,” *Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (April 2014).

13 Christopher Paul, Jessica Yeats, Colin P. Clarke, and Miriam Matthews, *Assessing and Evaluating Department of Defense Efforts to Inform, Influence, and Persuade: Desk Reference* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015).

14 Mark A. Ochoa, “Conventional Operations Must Be Less Expensive than Information Operations,” *IO Sphere* (June 2011), 43.

very different things with no universal consensus and at least four commonly repeated themes:

**Demand for Increased Resources.** The strategic communication reports showed strong consensus that capabilities to inform, influence, and persuade are under resourced. The call for more resources was the single most frequent recommendation, appearing in more than half of the 36 reports reviewed.<sup>15</sup> Agencies and departments broadly agreed on the need for both increased personnel and for more programmatic resources. This call for resources must be echoed and should emphasize both force structure and tools.

**Leadership.** Roughly one quarter of the 36 strategic communication and public diplomacy documents reviewed make an explicit call for leadership, which referred to at least four different things: 1) presidential attention (a desire of proponents in any issue area), 2) authority, 3) good choices (bad policies cannot be well communicated), and 4) clear direction. Distilling and synthesizing from these previous recommendations, leaders across the government should pay more attention to communication, to influence, and to the effects that actions and policies have or require in or through the information environment.

**A Clear Definition of Overall Strategy.** Often related to calls for leadership, almost one-third of the strategic communication reports reviewed make a call for clear strategic direction. According to one commentator, without a clear strategy, “the leaders of each department, agency and office are left to decide what is important.”<sup>16</sup> Most of the sources recommending clear strategy call for highest-level strategy, a clear foreign policy strategy that efforts to inform, influence, and persuade can support, as well as strategy that goes beyond a communication strategy. Unfortunately, critics have pointed out that the United States is often poor at strategy.<sup>17</sup>

While strategy may be hard, goals, at least, need to be clear, which is supported by research on assessment. That one cannot evaluate progress toward a goal that has not been clearly stated is self-evident. The gold standard for objectives in evaluation research is that they be SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.<sup>18</sup> Many of the calls for clear strategy would be more than satisfied by SMART strategic or operational objectives as well. Coupling the calls for leadership and strategy, leaders who are more attuned to thinking about the information environment might also be more willing to specify goals in a way that more clearly describes what they want to accomplish and how informing, influencing, and persuading can contribute.

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15 Christopher Paul, *Whither Strategic Communication? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009).

16 Lindsey J. Borg, “Communicating with Intent: DoD and Strategic Communication” (graduate studies report, Air University, April 2007), 23.

17 See, for example, the criticisms discussed in J. Boone Bartholomees, “Theory of Victory,” *Parameters* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 25–36; Richard Weitz, “The US Strategy ‘Deficit’: The Dominance of Political Messaging,” *Second Line of Defense: Delivering Capabilities to the Warfighter* blog (March 2008), <http://www.sldinfo.com/the-u-s-strategy-%E2%80%99Cdeficit%E2%80%9D-the-dominance-of-political-messaging/>; Robert Haddick, “Why is Washington so Bad at Strategy?” *Foreign Policy*, March 9, 2012; and Andy Zelleke and Justin Talbot Zorn, “United States: Where’s the Strategy?” *Diplomat*, February 5, 2014.

18 For the origin of the criteria, see George T. Doran, “There’s a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management’s Goals and Objectives,” *Management Review* 70, no. 11 (1981): 35–36.

### *Better Coordination*

Second in prevalence to increased resources is an admonition to coordinate better, also recommended in more than half of the reviewed strategic communication and public diplomacy documents. Many sources lament the lack of coordination of US government efforts to inform, influence, and persuade, both within and between agencies.<sup>19</sup> Reports of “information fratricide,” where one element of the government, including the military, makes a statement that contradicts or undermines messages from elsewhere in the government, abound.<sup>20</sup> Stepping beyond these calls for better coordination and integration between agencies and departments in this area, efforts to integrate and coordinate capabilities to inform, influence, and persuade with other military capabilities as part of the combined arms construct should continue. Information power should be viewed and treated as one of the combat arms.

Taken together, the reports on strategic communication and public diplomacy make clear that if informing, influencing, and persuading are important, we need to continue to improve our abilities in these areas. These top four recommendations and the challenges they imply are particularly interesting; while the first clearly indicates a need for increased resources the other three require commitment and change—improvements that could be made with little or no additional expenditure, a benefit in the increasingly austere fiscal climate.

### *Getting Better at Informing, Influencing, and Persuading*

Informing, influencing, and persuading are critical to support and achieve foreign policy goals. Such efforts are relatively cost effective, but this capability area is underfunded and otherwise in need of improvement. Suggestions for getting better at informing, influencing, and persuading in the current era of deepening budget cuts include:

**Continuing to Expand Resource Allocations.** Continue growing public diplomacy, information operations, military information support operations (MISO), and other information-related capabilities, as well as our ability to prepare, coordinate, and integrate such efforts with other forms of power.<sup>21</sup> This action will require more resources in this area for additional force structure, including personnel and formations and staff billets in the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of State (DoS), as well as investment in specialized tools.<sup>22</sup> As noted at the beginning of this article, asking for more when everyone else is tightening their belts is awkward, but the relatively low costs of such efforts, their critical importance, and the possible savings make this the right thing to do.

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19 See, for example, *A Smarter, More Secure America* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies Commission on Smart Power, 2007); Defense Science Board, *Task Force on Strategic Communication*; Kristin M. Lord, *Voices of America: U.S. Public Diplomacy for the 21st Century*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2008); and *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: DoD, 2006).

20 Walter E. Richter, “The Future of Information Operations,” *Military Review* (January-February 2009), 103–13.

21 Military information support operations were formerly known as psychological operations.

22 Specific tool requirements evolve with changing technology, but some examples of their usage include robust automated translation, monitoring social media, and visualizing the information environment.

### **Changing Culture to Create Communication Mindedness.**

Changes to address perceived gaps in leadership, clarity of objectives, and coordination must be made. Leaders and commanders need to behave as if foreign publics and other populations' perceptions affect the US government's ability to reach policy goals or operational objectives. Further, leaders and commanders need to understand the things they and their subordinates do and say shape and impact those perceptions and have further echoes in and through the information environment. Finally, individuals need to be thoughtful about and plan for the messages and signals their actions and utterances send.

Summarized, this package of awareness and consideration is "communication mindedness."<sup>23</sup> Significant progress toward leadership, goals, and integration of information efforts with other policies and operations could be made if all leaders and commanders possessed a certain communication mindedness and were predisposed to ask or think "what message does my planned course of action send" and "what message do I want it to send?" If leaders begin to ask questions about effects in and through the information environment, subordinates will have to try to answer them. This accountability will lead to at least three further positive developments: first, subordinates will ask these questions earlier in the planning process to be able to answer their leadership's queries. Second, subordinates will begin to seek out and consult with those who have relevant expertise in information operations and information-related capabilities rather than such specialists having to fight to try to somehow insert themselves into the planning process (which happens far too often at the moment).<sup>24</sup> Third, the answers to these questions will inevitably align with broader goals and lead to changes in operations or execution.

A bit of a culture change throughout the government and the DoD is required to support leaders and commanders in developing communication mindedness—thinking and asking critical predicating questions. The shift will take time, and it will take effort; fortunately, it will not take much money.

Two suggestions for inculcating this culture change include training and education programs and commanders modeling their expectations by communicating an information end state. Costs might exist with training and education or tradeoffs with existing curriculums may be necessitated; however, the importance of, and information on, the means to inform, influence, and persuade intentionally or otherwise should be prominent in the training and education of junior, midtier, and senior leaders. With sufficient exposure and acculturation, communication mindedness and even more sophisticated awareness of and thinking about these capabilities and processes can become fully integrated into planning and decision-making.

This awareness is particularly critical in the DoD where information combat power should become just another arm of the traditional combined arms approach as opposed to information operations and information-related capabilities being considered a

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<sup>23</sup> Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), introduction.

<sup>24</sup> See Helmus, Paul, and Glenn, *Enlisting Madison Avenue*, chap. 2.

second-class citizen as a source of nonlethal effects, an afterthought bolt-on to fires, or worse.<sup>25</sup> Professional military education for even junior officers should include introductory material on the possible contributions of informing, influencing, and persuading. Training on planning should explicitly include information operations as an important consideration for every operation. Training and education relevant to the informational element of national power should become more sophisticated throughout officers' careers.

A process of culture change driven by training and education can take years, perhaps even a generation. Thus, the second suggestion will initiate the needed near-term culture change process as commanders ask critical questions even when it is not natural to do so. Dennis Murphy, a former US Army War College professor, has suggested all statements of commander's intent should also include a commander's desired information end state, and I have echoed this suggestion repeatedly.<sup>26</sup> The inclusion of an information end state will force the commander and planning staff to think about and be specific about desired informational outcomes that will guide subordinate plans to comply with the commander's stated intent as well as provide more guidance and context for subordinates' autonomous decision-making in support of the mission.

Here is an extended example of the benefits of operating under such guidance. The traditional commander's intent might include the end state: "remove the insurgent threat from village X." Subordinates executing this guidance, depending on the existence of other standing orders or rules of engagement, might conceivably have the whole military toolbox open to them: they could level the village, cordon and search, or apply a variety of softer approaches. Now imagine the implications of additionally specifying the following information end state: "If possible, leave the population of village X neutral to US force presence." That intent significantly changes the approaches subordinates are likely to take while also allowing the commander to assign explicit priorities to physical versus informational or short-term versus long-term outcomes. The commander's intent can also note rare occasions in which informational end state does not matter. If commanders and their planning staffs think about and explicitly communicate cognitive and informational end states, their subordinates will have no choice but to do so as well. Under this construction, the commander accepts responsibility for conceiving the information end state while his subordinates naturally accept more responsibility for achieving it than they could have if it were left unstated.

This recommendation is obviously aimed explicitly at the Department of Defense, but also has applicability for senior leaders and decision-makers throughout the government.

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25 An example document conveying similar problems and proposing similar solutions is Deployable Training Division, *Integration of Lethal and Nonlethal Actions*, 3rd ed., Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper (Suffolk, VA: Joint Staff J7, 2016).

26 Dennis M. Murphy, *Fighting Back: New Media and Military Operations* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Center for Strategic Leadership, US Army War College, November 2008). Also see, Paul, "Getting Better at Strategic Communication" (testimony, hearing on The Evolution of Strategic Communication and Information Operations Since 9/11, Before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, July 12, 2011).

**Improving Department of State Capabilities.** Accepting that capabilities to inform, influence, and persuade are good and necessary, where should they be housed? The current distribution of such capabilities is not necessarily ideal.<sup>27</sup> Right now, “American public diplomacy wears combat boots.”<sup>28</sup> The Defense Department employs the majority of the resources—funding, manpower, tools, and programs—the US government uses to inform, influence, and persuade foreign audiences. Most observers and participants in government communications agree that this is not the ideal state of affairs. Both the White House and the Department of Defense concur; the Department of State or another civilian agency should have a greater share of the steady state US capabilities in this area.<sup>29</sup> This shift would, of course, require substantial changes at the State Department in terms of orientation, priorities, funding, and capabilities available for public diplomacy and strategic communication. This change also begs two questions: what is the right balance between civilian and military capabilities, and how do we get there?

Distributing informing, influencing, and persuading capabilities exclusively to the Department of State or to the Department of Defense is not an appropriate solution. Imagine that, in some foreseeable future, State Department capabilities become sufficiently robust to meet a baseline of steady-state needs on a global level. The Defense Department will still need to retain significant capability in this area for several reasons. One is that actions communicate. Defense personnel *will* continue to act and need the capabilities to support planning and coordinating the communication content of those actions. Defense agencies and military formations will also need at least the minimum communication capabilities to explain those actions and encourage favorable perceptions of those actions.

Also, Defense responsibilities for contingency response necessitate retaining capabilities to inform, influence, and persuade. Even the most robust State Department imaginable will lack the kind of surge capacity and expeditionary capability needed to respond to the crises and contingencies for which our military prepares. When the US military presence in a foreign country expands from negligible to massive, who will be alongside the operating forces, explaining and making their presence palatable? The answer is military communicators. If all the military communicators went away, no one would conduct critical inform, influence, and persuade missions at the outset of an emergent crisis, which is why the DoD needs to remain capable. In fact, Defense personnel, as argued above, should continue to become more capable, given the possible savings for other defense capabilities.

Further, military leaders should be encouraged to use informational combat power as part of their combined arms approach to prevail over our nation’s foes, rather than outsourcing the capability to other parts of the government.

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27 Paul, *Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates*.

28 Matthew Armstrong, “Operationalizing Public Diplomacy,” in *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, ed. Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 63.

29 White House, *Framework for Strategic Communication*; and Patricia H. Kushlis and Patricia Lee Sharpe, “Public Diplomacy Matters More Than Ever,” *Foreign Service Journal* 83, no. 10 (October 2006): 32.

The existing structure and organization at DoS limits its absorptive capacity for quickly building new or assuming existing responsibilities for informing, influencing, and persuading. Considerably smaller than DoD, State personnel allocations are also less flexible. Culturally, the State Department views its primary mission as traditional state-to-state diplomacy, not public diplomacy, and the public diplomacy apparatus is currently quite small.<sup>30</sup> To become the home for government capabilities in this area, DoS will need to pursue organizational and cultural changes and increase or transfer resource allocations in moderate, absorbable amounts.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Even though the government needs to increase resources and expand capabilities for informing, influencing, and persuading, the following three suggestions support using existing resources and capabilities more wisely and efficiently.

### *Emphasizing Assessment and Evaluation*

Too often, efforts to inform, influence, or persuade go unmeasured. The failure to establish clear evaluation criteria limits planners from determining the extent to which their efforts have been successful. Likewise, analysts may observe an effort's effectiveness, but have no way to explain the outcome. Quality assessments can improve planning, shape midcourse corrections, and improve accountability and oversight. While costs are associated with assessments, the benefits make them worthwhile. Good assessments can improve the prospects for a nascent effort, save a failing effort, and demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of successful efforts.<sup>31</sup>

### *MISO for Everyone*

Currently, all active duty Army Military Information Support Operations (MISO) personnel are tasked with supporting US Special Operations Command, leaving general purpose forces supported by reserve formations. This broad tasking, along with high clearance levels and operational environments, leaves MISO forces detached from line units, which results in tasks to produce influence products independently or provide close tactical support to special operators. Efforts organized in this way have produced valuable effects, especially at the tactical level; however, the need for effective informing, influencing, and persuading is bigger than that.

Actions speak louder than words. Maneuver and line forces far outnumber MISO forces and are the preponderant face of US forces to the populations in areas of operations worldwide. The words and deeds of these forces do contribute to influence, which is best if the

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30 One of the smallest State Department career tracks, or "cones" in State parlance, public diplomacy officers are only about 1,000 of approximately 11,000 foreign service officers. See Laurence Wohlers, *Getting The People Part Right: A Report on the Human Resources Dimension of U.S. Public Diplomacy*, with Katherine Brown and Chris Hensman (Washington, DC: Meridian International Center / US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, 2008), 8.

31 For industry, academia, and government best practices that are applicable to DoD assessments, see Christopher Paul, Jessica Yeats, Colin P. Clarke, Miriam Matthews, and Lauren Skrabala, *Assessing and Evaluating Department of Defense Efforts to Inform, Influence, and Persuade: Handbook for Practitioners* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015).

contribution is thoughtful and positive. How can the actions of our line forces contribute better and more consistently in this area? Greater command emphasis on influence and communication mindedness will help, but even when trying to make a positive contribution in this arena, most military personnel simply lack the expertise. One solution is more military information support operations force structure, but if these forces reduced the amount of time spent making influence products and increased the time spent training, preparing, and supporting the inform and influence activities of the rest of the force, thoughts about and employment of their capabilities would change. Instead of being exclusive, information operations could become inclusive.

Perhaps a model worth considering is the relationship between civil affairs (CA) forces and civil-military operations.<sup>32</sup> Like MISO, civil affairs is a discrete military organization within the service with its own personnel and force structure. As all other force elements at the commander's discretion, civil affairs units integrate with and support civil-military operations efforts, however, much more frequently than do their line unit colleagues. Civil affairs units engage in independent activities, but they also help plan and enable the efforts of other forces. MISO forces are the only personnel in the US government who are trained to conduct influence. What if we make the relationship of MISO to the (intentional or otherwise) influence efforts of maneuver units similar to the relationship between civil affairs and civil-military operations? Using military information support operation forces to directly support and enable the influence efforts of maneuver forces would reduce the number of products they would have time to produce, but the trade-offs are worth considering.

### *Cyberspace and Informing, Influencing, and Persuading*

Capabilities to defend and operate in cyberspace are of critical importance now and in the foreseeable future. The American need to improve in that area is broadly accepted; however, nascent and existing cyber-related organizations and capabilities are extremely well-resourced. In fact, cybercapabilities are currently suspected to be over-resourced in relation to the absorptive capacity of organizations and commands responsible for this area. Although cyberthreats are growing, may require serious investment, and are rightly supported with vigorous funding, at the moment authorities unfortunately lag proper capabilities and lexical agreements. Additionally, command and control disputes delay implementation and maturation of cybercapabilities.<sup>33</sup> Some cyber-resources could and should be slowed or diverted to related information capabilities.

Particularly relevant, a possible relationship between cyber-operations and information operations could give rise to *cyberenabled*

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32 Civil-military operations are defined as "activities of a commander performed by designated civil affairs or other military forces that establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, indigenous populations, and institutions, by directly supporting the attainment of objectives relating to the reestablishment or maintenance of stability within a region or host nation." See US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington, DC: DoD, February 15, 2016).

33 For criticism related to limiting authorities and bureaucracy, see Sydney J. Freedburg Jr., "Thornberry Fears Bureaucracy Hamstrings Cyber vs. Daesh," *Breaking Defense*, June 22, 2016, <http://breakingdefense.com/2016/06/thornberry-fears-bureaucracy-hamstrings-cyber-vs-isis/>.

*MISO*, which would fill an important operational seam. As an example, cyberforces can potentially access and exploit adversary networks and systems, to include electronic communications—e-mail, for example—however, just because offensive cyberoperations or computer network exploitation experts might be able to send messages to adversaries or potential adversaries, cyberexperts are not necessarily expert in the composition of effective personal influence messages. That expertise lies elsewhere—namely in military information support operations.

When tasked with a mission that includes an exploitation like this, a lash-up might occur if cyberforces contact and leverage *MISO* expertise, preferably at some point prior to the exact moment the adversary network has been penetrated and operators are poised, ready to type an influential message. Importantly, it is possible that cyberpersonnel would execute the mission without leveraging external expertise, mistaking their own expertise at creating the opportunity to send the message as sufficient for designing the content of the message, too.

Standing relationships between cyber formations or commands and military information support operation formations for efforts like or related to the one discussed above would not be unreasonable for executing cyberenabled *MISO*. The details of the variety of ways this relationship could be structured are not important here. That such relationships be considered and that the necessary capabilities be developed or constructed from existing ones is important. Even more important in this context, funds dedicated to the cybermission area can and should be used to support these improvements to both cyber and inform, influence, and persuade capabilities.

