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## **Jihad of the Pen: A Practitioners Guide to Conducting Effective Influence Operations in an Insurgency**

**Special to the *Small Wars Journal*  
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### **Dedication**

This small work is dedicated to all those who use the power of their minds guided by courage, humility, resourcefulness and compassion to achieve a better world in which the forces of tyranny, hatred, fanaticism, and ignorance are defeated.

### **Note to the Reader**

In reading this small work, the practitioner must keep in mind the following. In Islam, the concept of “jihad” (the Arabic word means “struggle”) consists of two aspects. The Lesser Jihad – with which the world is unfortunately somewhat familiar – is defined as “*armed resistance in defense of the faith and the Believers,*” —but only under prescribed conditions and under properly authorized leadership.

What most non-Muslims do not know is that in Islam the Greater Jihad is the struggle that takes place inwardly – within each soul and person. It is a great struggle to conquer one’s own evil and base desires, and triumph over one’s own ignorance, barbarity and spiritual darkness. The Greater Jihad is Islam’s great challenge to build a better world, one Believer at a time. Unfortunately, thanks to the cruel deeds of a relatively small number of extremists, the newspaper version of “jihad” has imprinted only a warped definition of the Lesser Jihad as meaning torture, murder, fanaticism, hatred, and xenophobia.

I chose the title “Jihad of the Pen” partly because the Prophet had once said: “*The ink of the scholar is more sacred than the blood of the martyr.*” In part, the title also derives from my fervent belief that the jihad of the pen is the battle all people must wage against ignorance everywhere. Each primary school student today, whether in America or Afghanistan, is carrying on his or her personal “Jihad of the Pen.” For it is only through education and a true spirituality that enlightenment – and peace on Earth – can someday be realized. And for those of us who

must fight the forces of an evil new Dark Age on the battlefield of ideas, “Jihad of the Pen” is equally appropriate. Firepower cannot defeat an Idea; only a better and more compelling Idea can overcome its cruel adversary. When spurred to action by blind hatred and fanaticism, ignorance is mankind’s greatest enemy.

Ours is truly a struggle of the pen.

## **Note of Thanks**

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The observations and opinions in this work are solely those of the author and do not represent the views of any U.S. Government department or agency, nor any private corporation or group. The author takes full responsibility for any errors of fact.

## **ISAF Counterinsurgency Guidance Key Points**

### **Embrace the people**

Think before you act. Understand the consequences of your actions – how you drive, how you patrol, how you relate to people, how you help the community. View your actions through the eyes of the Afghans. If we harm Afghan civilians, we sow the seeds of our own defeat.

Be an expert on the local situation. Build connections and hold routine *jirgas*. Afghan culture is founded on personal relationships. Listen to the population and adjust accordingly. Earn their trust. Develop their ownership in the solution. If they sweat for it, they will protect it.

Be a positive force in the community; shield the people from harm; foster stability.

*Partner with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)*

Live, eat, and train together, plan and operate together, depend on one another, and hold each other accountable – at all echelons down to soldier level. Treat them as equal partners in success.

Their success is our goal. Respect them; put them in the lead and coach them to excellence.

### **Build governance Capacity and Accountability**

Facilitate and enable transparent and accountable governance from the national to community level. Insist government officials serve the people; support those who do.

Confront corrupt officials. Protecting the people requires protection from physical harm, corruption and abuse of power.

### **Get Better Everyday**

Learn and adapt to the environment. Keep your skills sharp. Improve daily.

Learn how to shape the environment, and how to achieve greater effects with the people more quickly. Listen to and learn from our Afghan colleagues.

Communicate and share ideas. Challenge the conventional wisdom if it no longer fits the environment. This is a battle of wits – learn and adapt more quickly than the insurgent.

**-- Guidance from GEN Stanley McChrystal**

## **Table of Contents**

### **Part One: Looking over the Building Blocks**

1. The Future of War
2. What is Influence?
3. Why Bother with Persuasion?
4. Tribes, Governments, and Politics
5. The Pain of Cultural Change
6. Leaders and Their Sources of Power
7. The Building Blocks of Nations
8. Of Target Audiences
9. Linkage, OR How We are Tied Together
10. When Target Audiences' Interests Clash
11. Some Assembly Required
12. Does Control Equate with Support?

### **Part Two: Applying Operational Thinking to the Blocks**

13. Quo Vadis?
14. The Psyop Cycle
15. The Fine Art of Motivation
16. Rapport, Rapport, Rapport
17. The Conductor's Score
18. Cinderella's Slipper
19. Measuring Inputs or Outcomes?
20. The Game of Minds
21. The Voice of the Infantry
22. How Sick is the Patient?
23. Making a Silk Purse from a Sow's Ear
24. So What Can I Do?

### **Annexes**

- A: Precepts for Discussion and Debate; Larry's Laws
- B: Glossary
- C: Selected Propaganda Techniques
- D: "Just a Speech"
- E: Ideas for Strategic Influence Operations
- F: Ideas for Tactical Influence Operations

## **Jihad of the Pen**

### **A Practitioner's Guide to Conducting Effective Influence Operations in an Insurgency**

*Public sentiment is everything; with public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.*

*He who molds public opinion is greater than he who enacts laws.*  
Abraham Lincoln

Although no two insurgencies are exactly alike in all details, the inescapable fact is that at core all insurgencies are politically motivated. However primitive or bizarre the political vision of an insurgent group, the insurgent's goal remains constant: to overthrow an existing government and replace it with one of the insurgent's own choosing. Insurgency is "armed politics." It is a violent form of political competition.

Insurgents have historically employed a blend of two forces – persuasion and coercion (a negative form of persuasion) – to mobilize support for The Cause while undermining the government-in-being to the point at which it dissolves or is easily displaced. The more sophisticated (and usually successful) insurgent movements almost always employ a carefully balanced mix of blandishments and threats to achieve victory. Insurgent movements routinely use both "open" front groups and coalitions and truly clandestine groups in a political warfare campaign that the Sandinistas called *poder de doble cara*—power of two faces. Such an approach cannot be defeated by military power, but only by competent counterintelligence work combined with effective regime political warfare programs.

It is a mistake to believe that insurgents merely shoot their way into power. That is a description of a palace coup, not an insurgency. Insurgents build power from the grass roots up; coup plotters start at the top and work their way downward.

What many American military and civil officials frequently overlook or give short shrift to is the central importance of political warfare in insurgencies. It is usually the case that regimes and occupying forces rely more on weaponry and firepower than on persuasion and brainpower. In the vast majority of cases, the regime in power has a great advantage in weaponry over its opponents. But insurgents have time and again been able to offset that advantage by systematic – and often adroit – use of political warfare. Recognizing this difference in strategy, General Sir Frank Kitson observed that: "insurgents start with nothing but a cause and grow to strength, while the counter-insurgents start with everything but a cause and gradually decline in strength to the point of weakness."<sup>1</sup>

The greatest challenge we face in the present war is for the Afghan government to formulate and communicate a cause that is more powerful and compelling than that of the insurgents. Such a

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<sup>1</sup> Kitson, p. 29.

foundation would permit us to help our allies inspire and lead the Afghan people forward toward the realization of their vision.

This small book is intended to assist practitioners in employing effective political warfare campaigns in insurgencies. Much has been written about weapons and forces in guerrilla warfare. However, little attention has been given to the effective use of political warfare – brainpower – as a vital part of the battle. The author hopes that practitioners will find the political warfare methods presented herein to be sensible and straightforward and, if judiciously applied to local conditions, of immediate use in the field.

It is vital that commanders at all levels fully understand that military action and political warfare campaigns must go hand-in-hand. It is imperative that the two forms of battle be inextricably intertwined. No “kinetic” action should be contemplated unless it supports a key political and psychological objective. As General Stanley A. McChrystal has said, *“The point of security is to enable governance...My metric is not the enemy killed, not the ground taken: it’s how much governance we’ve got.”*

## Looking Over the Building Blocks

*Knowledge of human nature is the beginning and end of all political education.*  
Henry Brooks Adams

*A man will fight harder for his interests than his rights.*  
Napoleon

*The feeble tremble before opinion, the foolish defy it, the wise judge it, the skillful direct it.*  
Madame Jeanne Roland de la Platiere

### 1. The Future of War

Military journals in the twentieth century were filled with articles about “the future of war.” The great majority of writings painted pictures of push-button wars decided by lasers, computers, space-based weapons, aircraft of unbelievable speed and incredible armament, “smart” weapons, and other technological marvels. High technology, we were told, would shape the “future of war.”

Well, perhaps. The truth of the matter is that we do not know what the future holds.<sup>2</sup> The high-tech wars of the military journals would be nice, “clean” wars where machines fight other machines, nobody gets hurt, and the matter is decided in perhaps an hour or two. (In our favor, of course. And we don’t like casualties.)

But perhaps, as we survey the sorry state of the world in the early twenty-first century, we find...more of the same dirty, nasty, bloody low-tech wars that scourged the planet during the twentieth century. While American attention is riveted on Afghanistan, we should be aware that violent insurgencies are underway in perhaps a dozen other spots ranging from Colombia to the Philippines. These wars are not being fought with high-tech lasers or space-based weapons. Rather, they are being fought the age-old low-tech way using many of the simple infantry weapons of the past.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The author believes it doubtful that at some point in the future we will see a computerized replay of the Battle of Kursk, the Battle of Midway, or thousand-plane raids over occupied Europe. And despite our technological advantages – such as satellite imagery, Predator, various sensors, and so on – our Taliban adversaries (who have none of these toys) nevertheless appear to be doing rather well. Technology has given the West relatively few advantages over indigenous groups employing traditional methods of war.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul Vann, speaking of Vietnam, said: “*This is a political war, and it calls for discrimination in killing. The best weapon for killing would be a knife, but I’m afraid we can’t do it that way. The worst is an airplane. The next worse is artillery. Barring a knife, the best is a rifle – you know who you’re killing.*” When asking about the legality of using a knife to kill a certain Taliban leader, the author was told by a U.S. Government attorney that use of an edged weapon constituted “assassination,” hence illegal, whereas use of a Predator armed with a Hellfire missile to destroy the man’s home (and possibly accomplish the same end, but also killing members of the man’s family or community) was perfectly legal.



I think the techno-warriors glued to their computer screens have somehow missed what is actually happening in many countries outside the so-called First World. As we examine the reality in less developed countries, we see rapidly exploding populations in Africa, Asia and South America, the spread of filth and infectious disease despite heroic efforts by international agencies to combat them, widespread poverty and exploitation, growing food shortages in some areas, the uninterrupted expansion of huge slum areas around ungovernable mega cities, and the resulting spread of smoldering resentment and desire for revolutionary change.<sup>4</sup> This is the raw material from which violent political changes are made.

Revolutions are led by educated men often from the middle or upper classes, but they are sustained by an inexhaustible supply of followers recruited from marginalized groups who believe that given their desperate circumstances, they have nothing to lose and everything to gain by casting their lot with the revolutionaries.

So long as there are corrupt and rapacious governments in the world that callously feed upon unfortunate people trapped in a manmade hell, there will be upheavals. How easy it is for ambitious men and fanatics to stir this human broth to a roaring boil by playing upon the resentments of millions of people victimized by the greed and rapacity of a relative few. And, if trends continue, the social and economic degradation of the so-called Third World will only get much worse as the twenty-first century progresses.

An outburst against perceived injustice could be short, sharp and violent – perhaps a coup that brings down a repressive regime in a matter of days or even hours.

But where coups and brief revolutions are not possible, protracted wars – insurgencies – will be the option of choice. These insurgencies will develop over time in certain countries where governments either have abdicated their responsibilities, or perhaps become little more than cozy protection rackets that happen to have presidents and written constitutions.

Whatever the future actually holds, I think that despite America's preference for fighting swift high-tech conventional wars, it is more likely that we will face a series of slow-moving, protracted, low-tech upheavals in various parts of the world. Edward Lansdale once noted that: "*People's wars are not for fighters with short attention spans.*"<sup>5</sup> The ringing call "No More Vietnams" in the 1970s, and a similar White House outcry against involvement in insurgencies in the 1990s, is simply unrealistic. These cries merely had the effect of our sponging our memories squeaky clean as we tried to forget everything we had so painfully learned about insurgency in the 1960s and again in the 1980s.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Mike Davis, Planet of Slums, for a completely depressing view of life in certain under-developed lands and the despair of millions of humans who must live in what amount to urban garbage dumps. It is conceivable that insurgencies may become more frequent, due in part to unspeakable conditions in some countries combined with ever-wider access to media on the part of the poor and hungry that fuels an acute sense of deprivation, and resentment of the elites whom they blame for their misery.

<sup>5</sup> Edward G. Lansdale, p. 374.

<sup>6</sup> LTG Richard G. Stilwell, USA, commented: "One of the legacies of Vietnam has been – although it has taken us an inordinate amount of time – that we finally understand the total parameters of revolutionary warfare. We have finally comprehended that the enemy has fought for our psychological exhaustion rather than our physical defeat. We must remember this in the future." Author: let us hope we do remember this.

Whatever type of war we would prefer to engage in, our enemies may choose their own methods – and we will have to fight on their terms, not they on our terms. And those methods will almost certainly be low-tech.<sup>7</sup> It follows that, if we wish to avoid having to “re-learn” the lessons that we have already paid for in blood, we should actively maintain a body of knowledge and the skills needed for dealing more effectively with low intensity conflict in the future. Voluntary amnesia only compels us to re-learn the lessons that we already knew...but which we later deliberately erased from memory.

If future wars are to be high-tech, then we will need more sophisticated computers. But if, as I suspect, future wars are low-tech, we will need more knowledge of foreign areas and peoples, and far more sophisticated thinking.

But there is one other consideration. Frederick W. Lewis has been quoted as saying: “*The time to win a fight is before it starts.*”<sup>8</sup> The wisdom of this remark should guide us on the one hand to promote responsibility and good governance throughout the world and, on the other hand, to think ahead and prepare well in advance, anticipating areas where the application of American military and civilian power in an insurgency is unavoidable. In the case of Iraq and especially Afghanistan, we had little understanding of these countries going in, but the real crime was our refusal for many years to gain essential cultural and language expertise to function effectively in these lands. As the German philosopher Goethe noted: “*There is nothing more frightening than to see ignorance in action.*”<sup>9</sup>

If there should be one major difference in our future approach to insurgencies, let us hope that it will be the careful study of the area and people in which the conflict is taking place well before we commit our troops. Our chief weapon must be our brainpower – our knowledge of peoples, cultures, languages, politics and many other such factors. For if we cannot understand the local people and their cultural patterns, it follows that we will not understand the complex situation in which we find ourselves when struggling with an insurgency. If we cannot comprehend the situation, it is then virtually impossible for us to operate effectively. A laser or guided missile does not need to think culturally about its adversary. But in an insurgency, where understanding of local cultures is imperative, we must choose more sophisticated weaponry. The human brain is perhaps the most powerful weapon we possess. It is unfortunate that we so often leave it at home when we engage in conflict abroad.

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<sup>7</sup> In his excellent book The Accidental Guerrilla, David Kilcullen makes the following compelling argument that should be pondered by policymakers and all senior Defense Department officials: “...the efforts of insurgents and terrorists since 9/11 may in fact have already put an end, through unconventional and asymmetric means, to the much-bruited military superiority of the United States, showing the way to all future adversaries and leaving Western powers with fabulously capable and appallingly expensive militaries that are precisely adapted to exactly the wrong kind of war. The post-Cold War era of unparalleled U.S. military power may have been a passing phase: AQ might indeed turn out to be, as Zawahiri called it, the vanguard of a new era of conflict.” (p. 24)

<sup>8</sup> Frederick W. Lewis quoted in Clay, p. 174.

<sup>9</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe quoted in Moore & Turner, p. 62.

## 2. What is Influence?

Much is being said these days at the Pentagon about “Information Warfare” or, for those of a more dovish persuasion, “Information Operations.”

Unfortunately, as so often is the case with definitions, the term “Information Operations” – though appearing in numerous reports and PowerPoint briefings – is so vague that it can (and does) mean different things to different people. Since “IO” cannot really be defined and therefore largely exists in the mind of each beholder, it cannot be clearly understood. And if “IO” cannot be clearly understood and agreed upon, then – whatever it may happen to be – “IO” cannot be put into effective practice in the field.

In fact, a whole family of terms exists belonging to the general “IO” species – related like cousins, though by no means being all quite the same. Some of these terms are: “Psyop” (psychological operations), public information, public relations, public affairs, “effects,” advertising, political action, media relations, and so on. I think there must be at least a dozen such terms, all more or less related. The definitions overlap; some activities are better defined than others. Most terms are useful only in PowerPoint briefings.<sup>10</sup>

Let’s leave the semantic battle aside. We could wallow in that swamp for years without arriving at any useful conclusion. Even if we were to arrive at some conclusion, all we would have achieved is to create yet another “definition.” (While this would be quite useful for DOD PowerPoint briefings, it would have no practical value to us operationally in fighting an insurgency.)

Rather, we should ask ourselves what it is that we hope to *achieve* through our deeds and spoken and written words, and how we intend to get there from where we are now.

What really matters in politics, in commercial activities, and in warfare, is influence of groups and individuals that lead us to a specified, desired result. Put more directly, *we want someone to do something that meaningfully aids our Cause, or conversely, to cease doing things that hinder our Cause.* In an election, we hope to influence voters to vote for our candidate. In commerce, we want consumers to buy our product. In war, we want “our side” to prevail over its enemies. *But note that in all cases, we want someone to DO something. Not merely to KNOW something.*

“Influence” is one of those relatively rare words that is both a noun and an active verb. Influence can be a state of affairs, such as “China’s influence over North Korea.” But of greater interest to the practitioner is its use as an active verb. We say, “we will *influence* him to act...” It is here that “influence” acquires its motive power. *We want something to happen, something to take place.* And we have the means to achieve that end.

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<sup>10</sup> One of the U.S. Army’s less brilliant ideas was to create so-called “Effects Coordinators” in infantry divisions. Many of these “Effects Coordinators” were underemployed heavy weapons officers such as Division Artillery commanders. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, artillerymen have little cultural or political awareness of the lands in which they are supposed to achieve positive “effects.”

By contrast, “information” is a noun only. You cannot say, “we must information him to act...” Information exists, yes. But information is passive. By itself, information has no power. Rather, information is like a large reservoir from which electric power can be produced only IF that water can be made to run through a turbine. *Unless information can be made to DO something, it is virtually useless.*

Let us therefore talk of “influence” for the remainder of this paper. Simply put, *our goal is to motivate someone to do something.* (Or, conversely, to cease doing something we consider harmful.) We gain little by merely informing a person of something.

Dictionary definitions of influence give us a glimpse into what “influence” is all about:

- A power affecting a person, thing, or course of events, especially without direct or apparent effort;
- Power to sway or affect based on prestige, wealth, ability, or position.<sup>11</sup>

Here we see the potential for motivating someone to actually DO something. The central element is not merely the provision of “information;” it is instead the ability to induce, persuade, compel, provoke, bring about, cause or even cajole some action. The “results” we seek by motivating others always should have an active verb such as: create, produce, act, decide, buy, vote, attack, defend, participate, build, and so on.

We are ultimately seeking active participants, not passive spectators. Action is muscle power applied to achieve some purpose.

The outcome of an insurgency is decided by which side – the regime or the insurgent movement – the people ultimately choose to support. If that is so, it then follows that it is vital for each side not merely to *inform* people of things, but to *recruit the people as their active supporters and motivate them to achieve a stated purpose.* The provision of information, therefore, is merely one contributory part of the process. It is by no means the whole process.

Consider a political campaign. (An insurgency is not far removed from such.) What matters most in a political campaign is the strategy followed and the effectiveness of the candidate’s organization. Yes, issues do matter. But ultimately – especially if the election is between two candidates of equal merit and having roughly equal platforms (which is often the case) – what carries the day will be the effectiveness of the county and precinct organization. Effective local work by volunteers knocking on doors, handing out leaflets, making phone calls, and arranging a candidate’s personal visits and appearances at public rallies, will spell the margin between victory for one side and defeat for the other. The Message (ie. the information) has its place. But it is the organization and a viable strategy that turns a passive reservoir of voters into electric power at the polls.

So now, we return to the subject of “what is influence?”

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<sup>11</sup> Excerpted from [The American Heritage College Dictionary](#)

At the end of the day, “influence” may be thought of as the *ability to mobilize people* and, once they are mobilized, to regularly motivate them *to take specified actions*. It is the ability to induce broad masses of people to rally behind an idea or a leader and convince each and every person that he or she is *personally responsible* for the outcome.

Put another way, mobilization involves persuading the people that victory or defeat hinges on the combined effort of every individual. The essence of leadership is therefore the ability to inspire others with great hope or a grand vision, and then carry the people forward to victory despite a sea of troubles. Everyone must be involved! Everyone has a stake in the outcome! *“If the people are for you, you cannot lose. If the people are against you, you cannot win.”*

What is required before all else is a Cause, a vision, the clarity of a goal toward which all the people of a country can be striving. It is a national purpose. In the late 1940s, when the Communist idea threatened Western Europe, Jean Monnet, the father of modern Europe, noted: *“People will only fight for what is inside them and what they believe, and we must give them something to believe.”*<sup>12</sup> Before the people of any country can be mobilized, they must first be given some idea so important to believe in that they are willing if necessary to give their lives for its realization.

Two examples of Causes from recent history of successful counterinsurgencies that made good use of appropriate slogans coupled with genuine political programs are the Omani defeat of the Communist-backed Dhofari rebels and the British-Malay defeat of the Malayan Races Liberation Army [MRLA.] In the case of Oman, a new sultan took the throne in 1970 and immediately instituted reforms that increased the popularity of the Sultanate while taking away much of the rebels’ appeal. The slogan formulated by the British and Omanis was “Islam is our way, Freedom is our aim.”

In the case of Malaya, from 1953 the British had been preparing the colony for eventual independence under a responsible Malay government. There the slogan was “Merdeka” (Freedom) and it was given credence by the widely publicized steps toward independence granted in 1957. In both cases, *it is important to understand that the slogan was not an empty phrase, but shorthand for real, attainable political reforms that the people knew were underway and which they supported.*

As is well known, iconic phrases such as “Remember the Alamo” and “Land, Peace, Bread” have been used to mobilize support for revolutionary political movements. In the first example, the Texians (as they were then called) were fighting an insurgency to win freedom from Mexican rule. In the latter case, the Bolsheviks used their slogan to attract support from landless peasants, war-weary Russians, and masses of hungry people.

The point remains that a slogan is merely hot air unless it relates directly and obviously to political goals familiar to the people affected. An empty slogan is hypocrisy on parade.

Remember always that influence is an active verb, and its goal must always be action.

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<sup>12</sup> Monnet quoted in Theodore White, *In Search of History*, p.441

### 3. Why Bother with Persuasion?

In warfare, especially in an insurgency, it is not a question of *whether* to employ techniques to influence the attitudes and actions of a given population, but *how, when, where and to what degree*. Insurgencies are, almost by definition, “armed politics.” They are decided, not by force of arms, but by a fine blend of persuasion and coercion. It is the spoken word more than the aimed bullet that will determine the outcome of “armed politics.” For it is the ability of one side or the other to marshal broad public support that spells victory or defeat.

Echoing this thesis, Mao Tse-tung observed that: “*The mind of the enemy and the will of his leaders is a target of far more importance than the bodies of his troops.*”<sup>13</sup> What Americans often fail to understand is that public opinion has greater impact on the outcome of a war than does the quantity of armament and number of troops. One suspects that the Taliban has fully grasped the significance of Mao’s observation.

The relative unimportance of weapons in deciding an insurgency may not be obvious to some. While it is true that weapons can threaten, and even coerce to a limited extent, they cannot persuade. It must therefore be left to the men of ideas and words to shape public opinion and to mobilize the people. This is true even in conventional wars. It was said of Churchill that he “*mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.*” There can be no doubt that Churchill’s inspiring speeches, and his personal example of bravery and defiance of Nazi tyranny even at the height of the London Blitz, played a major role in sustaining the British people during World War II.

We know that words cannot move mountains; but they can move the multitude; and men are more ready to fight and die for a word than for anything else. Words shape thought; stir feelings; and get action; they kill and revive; corrupt and cure. The Men of Words – priests, prophets, intellectuals – have played a more decisive role in history than military leaders, statesmen, and businessmen.<sup>14</sup>

So it must be with you – and any practitioner in the art of defeating an insurgency. You should face the hard fact that you are already starting from a disadvantageous position. *There would be no insurgency were it not for serious dysfunctions in the political life of a country targeted by insurgents* – a country that we are trying to defend. Insurgencies do not occur in politically stable countries having governments supported by public opinion, administrative services worthy of the name, and a sense of justice and public order. As we have said in an earlier section, exploitation and degradation by ineffective or corrupt regimes is the usual wellspring for violent insurgencies.

Thus, in addition to the vital element of persuasion must be added the element of reform. For elites in the target country, reform may be a bitter pill to swallow. Change implies the loss or dilution of their power and perks. But without change – without real efforts to correct the ills

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<sup>13</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, p. 23.

<sup>14</sup> Author of this quotation is unknown. Religious men such as the Akhund (1863), the Mullah Saidullah (1897), the Mullah Powindah (early 20<sup>th</sup> century), and the Fakir of Ipi (1940s) led rebellions against British rule by blending the Pashtun desire for autonomy with the justification supplied by Islam.

and dysfunctions that have given rise to the insurgency – mobilization of the broad masses of the people through persuasion is impossible. No matter how golden your words may be, without credible evidence that positive change is taking place, they will have the impact of moist air on a hot July day.

Before considering the employment of persuasive techniques – influence operations – we must first examine government and politics. For politics is all about communication and the mobilization of people to actively support certain ideals or goals. Persuasion – communication – does not exist in a vacuum all by itself. It is part and parcel of the art of government; it is the indispensable element binding the governing elite with the governed. Persuasion is the nexus between policy formulation and action in the field.

#### **4. Tribes, Governments, and Politics**

Since at least Paleolithic times, Man has banded together in groups to secure two basic needs: a supply of food – primarily meat, nuts and berries – and protection from predators – either of the four-footed or the two-footed variety. Like other animals such as wolves or horses that form groups in the eternal search for security and sustenance, primitive bands of humans quickly established a loose hierarchy. Perhaps the most successful hunter or the bravest warrior was chosen to be leader of the group. Or it could be an old man considered by all to be very wise. As the group's leader, this individual was responsible for setting policy and making decisions – but often in concert with others.

As primitive hunter-gatherer groups organized themselves, what evolved was a form of government, however simple. At its most basic level the duty of any government is to ensure that all members of the group receive protection from outside threats, and share in the benefits and services available to the group. In return, members are expected to contribute in some way to the security or well being of the group as a whole. This may be through provision of food, defense against predators, or use of special skills.

When a government is successful at its basic tasks, the group is stable and over time will likely grow in size. But when government fails to provide either protection or resources, the group itself will dissolve. In Paleolithic times, it may be inferred that a “failure of government” proved fatal to the members of the group. If a group is unable to obtain sufficient food or protect itself from enemies, the members will die or be dispersed.

Government consists broadly of two parts: policy and administration. Policy is the plan or general course of action that a group (or leader) decides upon. Administration is the mechanism for carrying out the policy that has been decided upon. It follows that a policy without effective administration is feckless, and administration without a policy is aimless, even useless. Successful groups therefore decide upon a course of action and then establish effective means for attaining the goals specified.

Over many millennia, this simple pattern of government evolved into kingdoms, city states, great empires, theocracies, republics, and dictatorships of various stripes. But some groups maintained themselves through untold centuries pretty much as they had formed. Even today, in several

parts of the world, tribes and clans may be found, each with its distinct form of tribal government. They are self-governing units, often with a tribal law or centuries of “precedent” upon which to base their concepts of justice, criteria for selecting new leaders, methods of making decisions, and procedures for distributing benefits to the tribe’s members.

Problems arise, however, when one system of government is superimposed upon another already existing system of government. This is especially true if the new system is forced upon the group by conquerors and outsiders. New methods of establishing policy, and alien means of administering policy [between the newly imposed form of government and the old, traditional way] can result in violent conflict.

With the spread of European colonialism between 1520 and 1890, European systems of government often displaced local systems, whether tribal or monarchical. This was especially true of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, but also partly true of the later Dutch, French, and English empires. Perhaps because of their highly painful experience during the 1770s and 1780s when attempting to displace local governments in the Thirteen Original Colonies in favor of direct rule from London, the British later evolved a “hybrid” approach that often co-opted local systems of government. Wherever possible, they preserved and respected local administrative mechanisms and decision-making. This was certainly the pattern followed in much of British India in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

As British India expanded to the northwest, and British regiments pushed into the hills west of the Indus River, they encountered tribal peoples whose system of government was little changed despite the passage of (at least) two and a half millennia. These were the Afghan, or Pashtun,<sup>15</sup> tribesmen living as they had been for centuries under a system of councils governed by traditional law and functioning as bodies combining legislative, judicial, and executive powers.

In general the British had the wisdom to leave these Afghan tribesmen alone, so long as they posed no threat to British imperial interests. Tribal raiding into “settled areas” such as Punjab or Sindh would not be tolerated. But so long as the tribal elders confined themselves to their own affairs in the hills beyond the Indus, the British were content to appoint Political Agents, grant cash subsidies, and treat the tribes as clients, not subjects.

The western world has not thought much about tribes for many centuries. In Europe, the last “barbarian” tribes crossed the Rhine about 1,500 years ago. They wandered over the remains of the Roman Empire, became kingdoms, and evolved in time into Westphalian nation states. Americans tend to associate tribes with naïve and unpredictable “noble savages” who wield tomahawks one moment and trade land for beads the next. These stereotypes color Western attitudes toward groups having tribal forms of government.

But stereotypes often mislead as to understanding individuals and groups. And they do so with regard to Afghan (and other) tribal groups today. In point of fact, the tribal form of organization is neither especially “barbaric” nor unpredictable. Indeed, the reason that tribal forms of

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<sup>15</sup> The Hindi word for Pashtun is “Pathan,” a term often seen in British and Indian works referring to the Afghans at large and the Pashtuns in particular. The Pashtuns refer to themselves as Pukhtana or Pashtana depending upon their region. Non-Pashtuns call them Awghans or Afghans.



government and politics survive at all is precisely because, in their particular cultural and geographic situations, they are effective. What proves effective endures.

Tribal forms of social organization and government are remarkably stable and predictable if they are not disturbed from “outside.” The tribe or sub-tribe has its hierarchy, its procedures, its beliefs, its laws and its needs. These are long established and known to every member of the tribe, almost from infancy.

Sir Olaf Caroe, last British governor of the North West Frontier Province, and an accomplished scholar on the Pashtuns, had this to say about tribal structure:

It is indeed doubtful whether there exists today elsewhere in the tribal world any organization so closely knit as is a Pathan tribe in the inter-connection and relationship of the various parts of the tree, down to the last twig. The details of these arrangements are known to all maliks and elders and, in so far as they affect individual families, to all adult male members of a tribe, and no doubt to the women also. The ancestral share in the tribal account of profit and loss is an essential part of this tribal lore, and is the tribal guide in peace and in war.<sup>16</sup>

Tribal societies, whether those of the upper Amazon, Southeast Asia, the American West, Central Asia, or Afghanistan, all have in common certain self-contained and highly self-sufficient ways of life. Tribesmen do not look much, if at all, to the outside world. For the most part, tribal groups prefer that the outside world stay outside, thank you. Change is seen as threatening, for it has the potential to upset the hierarchy, disturb procedures, and compromise the ancient beliefs and laws of the tribe, while creating an entirely new set of challenges and needs. This attitude tends to make tribal societies highly conservative in their views, suspicious of outsiders, and willing to resist change by force if necessary.

The noted scholar of Afghanistan, Louis Dupree, makes the following observations:

The village builds a “mud curtain” around itself for protection against the outside world, which has often come to the village in the past. Sustained relations with the outside world have seldom been pleasant, for outsiders usually come to *extract* from, not bring anything into, the village. Items extracted include rent, taxes, conscripts for armies, women for the harems of the rich and powerful. The process, therefore, has generally been one way, *away* from the village. As a consequence, most villagers simply cannot believe that central governments, provincial governments, or individual local or foreign technicians want to introduce permanent reforms.<sup>17</sup>

Considering Dupree’s observation from the perspective of history, it is certainly easy to see why invaders from Alexander of Macedon to Boris Gromov of the USSR would not be terribly well received in Afghan villages. Even if they are well-meaning, outsiders upset centuries-old established patterns of life, power relationships, local economies, and village beliefs. And, as the historical record shows, not all outsiders were well meaning.

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<sup>16</sup> Caroe, p. 11

<sup>17</sup> Dupree, p. 249

Despite the wishes of most tribesmen and villagers to be left alone, the world nonetheless intrudes upon their lives. For centuries, mountain fastnesses, raging torrents, torrid jungles, blazing deserts, and other natural barriers prevented intrusions and provided some protection to tribal groups from outside influences. Advances in technology in the so-called “developed world” have overcome these barriers by means of transportation and telecommunications. The question is no longer *whether* ancient tribal cultures can be preserved intact, but *how rapidly* – and in what ways – tribal cultures will be altered permanently by outsiders. Many tribal groups already have ceased to exist.

Pashtuns in the region take great pride in asserting their autonomy and declare that their *Pashtunwali* tradition and tribal *jirgas* supersede state law codes and courts. *Pashtunwali* Is both a code of honor and a code of conduct that structures individual and group behavior in a way that allows communities to govern themselves in the absence of formal government. In political terms they see themselves as members of stateless societies that owe little or nothing to the national governments that now declare sovereignty over them. Their identity is not constituted in terms of states but in terms of tribes and localities. Even “tribe” may be too concrete a gloss for *qawm*, or solidarity groups that change from situation to situation. (p. 9).<sup>18</sup>

State actors have a hard time appreciating the dynamics of such a system. They see regularities where they do not exist, attribute to tribes a greater degree of unity than they actually possess, and find themselves ill-equipped to deal with personality-driven politics that may be as changeable as the weather. (p. 10).<sup>19</sup>

Islamists have undermined ethnic and tribal unity through their emphasis on a global pan-Islamic identity. But Pashtun nationalists have always noted that Pashtun identity is rooted in traditions older than Islam. (pp. 7-8)<sup>20</sup>

## 5. The Pain of Cultural Change

As noted, tribal cultures in almost every corner of the world are being challenged by the outside world. The areas of the Earth where tribes held sway for millennia are shrinking at an increasing rate. It is entirely possible that in a century or two tribal cultures will be a subject for study only by historians, not a matter of practical interest for the tourist or the soldier. Central governments demand control over national territory and indigenous populations, and many such governments, especially in Africa and Asia, are making strenuous efforts to create a “nationality” where until now only tribal identities existed.

It is well known that massive shifts in population – internal migrations from rural areas to cities – are currently taking place in Africa, South America, and in Afghanistan itself. Population growth in rural areas creates enormous pressures on impoverished tribesmen to relocate to urban

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<sup>18</sup> Hawthorne. The editor, Amy Hawthorne, is Executive Director of Hollings. Thomas Barfield (President, AIAS) also consulted on the report.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

areas. Partly this is due to the lure of economic opportunities believed to exist in cities – especially if there is increasingly insufficient pasturage or arable land in tribal areas. But partly it is also due to the desire of tribesmen to escape from areas where lawlessness and violence reign supreme. They perceive relative safety in the cities, even if crime rates are soaring in such places as Nairobi and Rio de Janeiro.

The same social forces are at work in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's population now stands at an estimated 33 million, of which approximately 42 percent are of Pashtun heritage, another 27 percent are Tajiks, about 9 percent each are Hazaras and Uzbeks, and the rest are a potpourri of ethnic groups such as Turkmen, Baloch, Pash'ai, Aimaks, Qizilbash, and Nuristani. According to the 2008 *CIA World Factbook*, Afghanistan's annual growth rate stands at 2.6%. Nearly 45% of Afghanistan's population is below the age of 15.<sup>21</sup>

The clear implication of these numbers is that Afghanistan's population will expand rapidly – hitting almost one million a year in the not distant future. Given an unemployment rate of about 40%, an overall literacy rate of about 28%, and a very high percentage of children and youth, the demographics alone paint a sobering picture for economic and political development in Afghanistan.<sup>22</sup>

There is one special factor not reflected in the numbers that should be noted regarding Afghanistan's demographics. That is the tragic fact of more than thirty years (so far) of war and disorder that warped the traditional social system. Prior to the Soviet invasion of late 1979, there could be no question that Afghanistan was a tribal and agrarian country with a capital city and a few small cities. However, since that time, truly profound changes have taken place concerning Afghanistan's demographics.<sup>23</sup>

Afghanistan's economy is still dominated by agriculture, but its population has begun to change in significant ways. One of those ways is the concentration of thousands of rural villagers in the cities.

A good example is the city of Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan. Before the Soviet invasion, Jalalabad had perhaps 30,000 residents. Today its population is just over 200,000. This increase was not due to Jalalabad residents happily making thousands of

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<sup>21</sup> CIA World Factbook (2008.) Readers should be aware that accurate statistics are few and far between in Afghanistan. The CIA's estimates are accepted by many as the "best available," but should not be thought of as "absolutely correct." Also, bear in mind that literacy and unemployment figures vary from city to rural area, and from province to province. The CIA's figures are for Afghanistan as a whole.

<sup>22</sup> The unemployment rate for some groups such as youth or Hazaras may be significantly higher. Kabul (and perhaps other cities) may be developing a large urban "underclass" that is unemployed, uneducated, and essentially rootless. Moreover, the Afghan educational system – based largely on rote memory rather than experiential learning as in the West – may be failing to prepare young Afghans for employment.

<sup>23</sup> The devastation of the countryside was not entirely due to the Soviet Army's scorched earth policy. The Mujahedin also contributed to the general destruction. Speaking in 2008 to an American officer in Paktika Province, Commander Pari (Safaraz Zadran) boasted that during the war he had burned 1,200 homes of "Communists." Whether or not the victims were, in fact, "Communists" is open to question. The fact remains that these villagers and rural families were rendered homeless and had no choice but to flee to the cities or to Pakistan. Both sides contributed to the relative depopulation of the countryside.

babies. Rather, thousands of refugees fled to the city from different parts of the province.<sup>24</sup> Similar migrations occurred to other cities as well. Moreover, these internal migrations continue. Indeed, Afghanistan is in the midst of a profound, even fundamental, period of cultural and demographic change.

In Nangarhar there are three dominant tribes and perhaps another eight or ten small tribal groups. The three dominant groups are the Mohmands in northeastern Nangarhar, the Shinwari tribe in the southeast, and the Khogianis in the southwest. Although all three tribes are Pashtuns, they are distinct from one another. Indeed, the three tribes have a history of clashing over “*zar, zan, zamin*.”<sup>25</sup>

But under the pressure of war and internal upheaval, especially during the anti-Soviet war (1979-1989) and the period of Mujahedin rule (1992-1996,) Shinwaris, Khogianis, and Mohmands all moved into Jalalabad. There they became neighbors, business partners, employers or customers of one another and, in some cases, in-laws. As time passed, the “tribal” aspect began to blur and diminish and was replaced by an urban identification as “Jalalabadis.”<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that the tribal heritage is lost entirely. But it is to say that a social process is taking place that is, at least in a broad sense, roughly similar to the “melting pot” which occurred a century ago in the United States as Italians, Poles, Irish, and Germans arrived in New York City and became “New Yorkers.”

The point of this discussion of tribal structure and its breakdown due to economic factors and warfare is not to indulge in an academic exercise, but to give the practitioner useful background in order to understand the environment in which he must operate.

As a general rule, in Afghanistan’s more remote areas (and that is a lot of the country) a practitioner is more likely to meet and deal with tribes and leaders who follow traditional social patterns. Tribes and their leaders will be more reticent about forming relationships with outsiders, more tentative about “outside influences,” less willing to jump on board with American initiatives. This is not to say that it is impossible to build worthwhile relationships, or to enlist the support of tribal groups. It is to say that it will take longer and be harder to do.

In the cities – such as Jalalabad, Kabul, Mazar i-sharif, Kandahar, Khowst, and most others – a practitioner will find himself dealing with a significantly different kind of Afghan. If that individual has lived in a city for a long period, or been born there, he will hold values quite different from those found among his tribal kinsmen. Settlement in towns and cities requires the acquisition of different skills and the adoption of different values, different attitudes toward

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<sup>24</sup> Refugees who left Afghanistan for Pakistan and Iran numbered perhaps 4.4 million. Thousands more were internal refugees who moved from the devastated countryside into the relative protection of the cities. Others, more fortunate, fled to Europe and the United States. Many tens of thousands still remain in dismal refugee camps in western Pakistan and eastern Iran where they are easy prey for extremist recruiters. The author is surprised that the United States and the international community have devoted so little attention to promoting the resettlement of Afghans resident in these miserable camps, as that action alone would dry up a major source of insurgent recruitment of fresh manpower.

<sup>25</sup> Literally: “gold (money), women, and land.” Land disputes are a special cause of conflict.

<sup>26</sup> Such tribal merging can produce ethnic nationalism. Dr. Munoz observes that Pashtun nationalism is on a sharp rise in the cities, but we do not fully understand its impact.

people from other backgrounds, and above all, a very different outlook on change and new ideas. Forming relationships with urbanites will be somewhat easier for an outsider, but will involve equally careful thinking when considering development of viable political mobilization strategies.

Even in the nineteenth century, there was a significant distinction between Pashtuns who historically lived under strong governments in places like Qandahar and Peshawar and those who lived in self-governing communities in regions beyond the reach of state administration. Those in the self-governing areas tended to assert that they were the only true Pashtuns since they included political autonomy as a key aspect of Pashtun identity. The majority of Pashtuns who lived in areas under state administration focused on a broader definition that declared an ethnic unity based on Pashtun descent and speaking Pashto. Ethno-nationalists gave these internal divisions little importance because they defined Pashtuns by contrasting them with other ethnic groups such as Punjabis, Tajiks, Sindhis, or Turks.<sup>27</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn is that practitioners must vary their approaches depending upon the people who live in a given area. This point is far from trivial. As we will see in a later section when we examine “target audiences” as building blocks for effective influence campaigns, city dwellers are fundamentally different from tribal people living a traditional existence.

## **6. Leaders and Their Sources of Power**

As mentioned, a group will almost always choose a leader who will serve the group’s paramount interests of ensuring the security of the group and providing the basic necessities for survival. Leaders come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but all are shaped to a greater or lesser extent by the culture from which they come, as well as the personal attributes they possess. A leader who has genuine roots with his people is necessarily reflective of their cultural norms as well as their interests.

Speaking again of Afghan villages, Dupree has this to say about the difficulty of meeting and forming relationships with tribal leaders:

In addition, an outsider seldom meets the true power elite of a village unless he remains for an extended period. When outsiders approach, the village leaders disappear behind mud walls, and the first line of defense (second line of power) come forward to greet the strangers with formalized hospitality, which surprisingly enough also serves as a defensive technique. If the central government identifies the village or tribal elite, control becomes easier as the zones of relative inaccessibility evaporate with the creation of an effective infrastructure. The formalized hospitality of the villager can quickly develop into hostility unless the outsider becomes a functioning member of the society.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hawthorne, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Dupree, pp. 249-250

The point is that a community will protect its leaders until it can be sure of the pacific or beneficial nature of the visitor. The Pashtun code of conduct, Pashtunwali, demands that visitors be entertained and protected. But the code says nothing about suspending or eliminating the curtain of suspicion and reserve that hangs between the tribesman and his “outsider” guest. That curtain of suspicion will remain until it is plain that the visitor can establish his *bona fides* as a friend or member of tribal society.

In urban societies, leaders in political life or business often are transient. They rise and survive if they are able to deliver what their supporters demand – that is, “results.” But if leaders in modern pluralistic societies cannot or will not deliver “results” (however those may be defined) they are swiftly replaced. The group will search until it finds a leader who can and does produce “results.” Outsiders may be more willingly tolerated if they appear able to “deliver results,” but outsiders perceived to have failed as leaders will be rejected far more quickly than would be the case with hereditary tribal leaders.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, in both traditional and complex societies, the elements that give power and authority to leaders are comparable. In fact, broadly speaking, there are five such factors. These forms of power, in more or less descending order of their influence, are as follows: legitimate, reward, expert, referent, and coercive.

Legitimate power. This form of power is based on a leader’s acknowledged right to control or direct others based upon law or tradition. In complex societies, such as those found in Western Europe or North America, legitimate power may derive from popular election or lawful appointment to office. Military officers hold this form of power by virtue of their appointments (which are also, hopefully, based on merit.) Also, clergymen, police officers, and corporate CEOs have this power. In traditional societies, a tribal chief, village elder, or religious figure such as a *pir* or *sayyid* has legitimate power. Their authority derives from established systems of descent and kinship, and centuries-old tribal procedures for recognizing leadership.

Reward power. Reward power is fairly obvious since it involves the ability to bestow material or symbolic rewards such as land, money, honorary titles, or other benefits. A commander who can promote or award a decoration has at his disposal reward power. Similarly, a rich man who can grant a tract of prime farmland to a tenant or give cash rewards has this power. It should be clear, however, that the power to reward does not necessarily follow from legitimate power. There are instances where those holding positions of power by virtue of legitimacy may lack rewards to bestow.

Expert power. The third form of individual power derives from expertise. This is widely found in advanced societies in the shape of doctors, engineers, scientists, and others who have established reputations for having special knowledge or skills. Where the individual has recognized skill, critical knowledge, or specialized expertise needed by society, the person will possess expert power. In traditional societies, expert power may rest with “the best” farmer, the

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<sup>29</sup> It is possible that this tendency is behind the sharp decline in Afghan public opinion toward the United States and its allies as they appear unable or unwilling to deliver “results.” See the 9 Feb 2009 opinion poll published by ABC/BBC/ARD at <http://abcnews.go.com/PollingUnit/story?id=6787686>. Cited by Gary Langer as “Frustration With War, Problems in Daily Life Send Afghan Support for U.S. Efforts Tumbling.”

most skillful hunter or fisherman, the man who can build “the best” boats, longhouses or stone forts. In Afghanistan, men who demonstrate exceptional skill with weapons have expert power. Even though such a person may not be the recognized leader of a certain group by virtue of legitimacy or reward, that individual’s advice and counsel will be heard and acted upon by the group. He possesses a measure of authority.

Referent power. This form of power derives from a special accomplishment, personal charisma, status as a relative of some important person, “connections,” and similar abilities. In modern societies, persons who have close relationships with presidents, CEOs, kings, or other leaders have referent power. They can get you in to see these people...or equally easily, keep you out. Famous sports figures or entertainers often have referent power. Great orators and those who can set in motion mass organizations through force of personality have it as well. Traditional societies feature individuals such as tribal bards and poets having exceptional memories who can recount the history of the tribe. Clairvoyants and persons believed to have the power of prophecy have influence. In the case of Afghanistan, men of unquestioned bravery also acquire referent power.

Coercive power. This last form of power is obvious, and is the opposite of reward power. It is based on a person’s ability to punish an individual or group. Many leaders having legitimate power also possess the power to punish. Not surprisingly, courts of law and judges largely exercise coercive, rather than reward power. Coercion is based on fear. Unless it is combined with other forms of power, coercion is negative and shapes opinion and actions based on fear alone. It has force only so long as the ability remains to punish or inflict injury. Coercive power vanishes immediately when the ability to punish or to instill fear is lost. This is one of the major forms of power used by insurgent groups.

It can readily be understood that an individual possessing two or more forms of power can be highly influential in a given society. This is especially the case if one form is legitimate power. In Psyop circles these people are known as “key communicators” and are extremely important in conducting campaigns to influence attitudes and behavior of various groups.<sup>30</sup> In doing analyses of target audiences (as we will discuss in a later section) it is vital to identify key communicators and the sources of their power. Key communicators are pivotal because their opinions influence the thoughts and behavior of the people who look to them for leadership.

Edward L. Bernays, today virtually unknown, but acknowledged as the “father of American advertising” made this observation in 1928 about “key communicators:”

The voice of the people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up for it by the group of leaders in whom it believes and by those persons who understand the manipulation of public opinion. It is composed of inherited prejudices and symbols and clichés and verbal formulas supplied to them by the leaders.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Annex B – Glossary. Key communicators are vital elements in any successful campaign.

<sup>31</sup> Bernays, p. 92

If you do not believe that key communicators wield power over their audiences and help shape public opinion, consider the influence that Oprah Winfrey or the late Walter Cronkite have exerted over literally millions of their listeners.

Today in Afghanistan the U.S. Army encourages “key leader engagements.” And this is good as far as it goes, though I have a strong suspicion that some American commanders are more focused on bumping up the *numbers* of such engagements rather than ensuring the depth and quality of those engagements. Commanders also may not fully grasp the elements of power that a “key leader” actually possesses – *the key leader and the sources of his influence must be considered as being of one and the same substance*. Thus, the sources of a key leader’s power must be fully understood if the “key leader engagement” is to be successful.

But perhaps of greatest importance is the general American failure to comprehend the engagement of a key leader *as merely part of an integrated political warfare campaign*. This is not at all surprising given the fact that most American military officers fail to understand the political element in warfare generally, and political warfare’s vital role in an insurgency. Integrated campaigns will be discussed in Section 17.

Once again we hear the words of Edward Bernays, recalling his days as a propagandist in 1917 for the Woodrow Wilson Administration.

[The Wilson Administration propagandists] not only appealed to the individual by means of every approach – visual, graphic, and auditory – to support the national endeavor, but they also secured the cooperation of key men in every group – persons whose mere word carried authority to hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousands of followers.

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Thus [the Wilson propagandists] automatically gained the support of fraternal, religious, commercial, patriotic, social and local groups whose members took their opinions from their accustomed leaders and spokesmen, or from the periodical publications which they were accustomed to read and believe.<sup>32</sup>

Always bear in mind that engaging a key leader, however successfully it is done, has only marginal value unless it is reinforced and followed by other forms of influence designed to shape the political situation in a given district or community. This can only be done through a fully integrated and consistent political influence campaign.

## **7. The Building Blocks of Nations**

Since World War II, and especially since the Telecommunications Revolution of the 1950s that brought “network news” to every household in America, the focus of many Americans has been on national level events at the expense of what is happening locally. With the exception of devastating tornados and ax murders – which do make national news – events taking place in counties and small towns are generally ignored.

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27



And yet, what is often forgotten is that America consists of some 3,000 counties and several thousand cities and towns. Although we usually think of ourselves as “a great nation,” the fact of the matter is that we all live in municipalities and counties – local branches of government. It is unfortunately the case that many millions of Americans devoutly ignore local government – an assertion easily proved by low voter turnout for most municipal and county elections.

In fact, it is local government that does the heavy lifting that (for most of us) makes life bearable, even interesting. After all, who provides the streets, parks, libraries, schools, water and sewer services, many bus services, police and fire protection, civil marriage and land registrations, garbage collection, and a host of other services? But yet, we Americans take all this (and more) for granted. Somehow “someone else” does all this for us as if by magic. Local government is, for many Americans, almost invisible.

That “someone else” who does the magic is our wonderful network of local governments. We barely think about local government unless, of course, some problem emerges. If the garbage is not collected, or there are potholes, then and only then do we roar about the “failings” of City Hall or the County Board.

Now, in some countries, especially those in the so-called Third World, local government barely exists. (Of course, we must note that there are even parts of the United States where “local government” also barely exists.) But in the United States competent local governments that provide daily administrative and public services are the norm, not the exception. However, in much of the so-called Third World, competent, effective local governments are very much the exception than the norm.

We sometimes wonder why some countries in parts of Africa or Asia are highly unstable. Indeed, observers piously declare such countries to be “failed states,” and dismiss these unhappy lands as if being a “failed state” was ordained by Nature. Only rarely does it occur to these pious commentators that what has “failed” is public order, governance, and administration at the local level. *For without effective local administration, I would venture to say that it is impossible to build a strong national government.*

Put a more positive way, strong, functioning local governments are the solid blocks upon which strong, capable national governments are built. If a country’s communities are well administered, more often than not the central government also will be administered in a manner that benefits the citizens. This is as true of Switzerland or Canada as it is of Japan or the United States. But if there is no public administration at the local level, we can hardly expect a “national” government to be anything but an empty shell.

A word must be said here about tribal government or, as some would say poetically, “governance without government.”<sup>33</sup> While it is true that tribal governments usually are not in a position to provide paved city streets, fine libraries, or regular water and sewer services, the services that tribal governments do provide often are quite adequate, and sometimes even impressive. Among the services most prized by tribesmen are security and justice – the latter, swift and sure.

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<sup>33</sup> Author is indebted to friend and colleague Dr. David C. Ellis, USSOCOM, for this descriptive phrase.

So what is the problem here, as it relates to insurgency and political instability?

In my opinion, the “problem” is the breakdown of tribal administration in certain localities due to war or economic pressures without any compensating buildup of more modern forms of local government. *In short, in some areas, no one at all is providing the needed security for a community or the services, however minimal, that a community requires. In effect, there is an administrative vacuum at the local level.*

Nature abhors a vacuum, we are told, but insurgents love them. Where an administrative vacuum exists, there an insurgent will surely go. And set up shop.

A country like Afghanistan presents a complicated picture in the field of government. In many areas it has functioning tribal councils – often quite capable. Afghanistan also has a growing number of Community Development Councils – a new form of elected body that serves a locality. But it also has a great many areas where tribal authority has been compromised or destroyed, either by the ravages of thirty years of war or by intentional decapitation by insurgents. It is these localities – where neither traditional, nor more “modern” forms of government exist – that are most in need of administrative services from some entity.

Not surprisingly, it is these same localities lacking effective administration that are most vulnerable to assumption of quasi-governmental authority by various insurgent groups.

## **8. Of Target Audiences**

If you have ever run a campaign or been a candidate for elective office, you are aware of the fact that every community, every ward, every street consists of a variety of people. It follows that the larger the community or governmental district, the greater the number of people – and the *kinds* of people – who live within its jurisdiction.

A candidate for public office – let’s say, for mayor of a city – knows where the rich people live, where the poor dwell, where the merchants have their businesses, and where persons of various ethnic backgrounds are found. Woe betide a candidate who does not know the political geography of his district! His electoral defeat is a near certainty.

All of these groups: rich, poor, merchants, farmers, members of ethnic groups, and so on, constitute what are called “target audiences.” A target audience is “*a well-defined group having common characteristics, attitudes, and needs.*”<sup>34</sup> That is, a practitioner can identify a target audience based upon shared factors among a defined group of people such as language, religion, occupation, gender, level of education or income, and many others. Political strategists analyze these audiences carefully – and well before Election Day. Indeed, it would be a foolish campaign manager who would launch a campaign totally ignorant of who lives in his candidate’s district.

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<sup>34</sup> See Glossary at Annex B.

And yet, overseas, our military and civil authorities make this mistake routinely. They do not know anything more about the areas in which they operate beyond the names of a few leading figures. Our people usually know very little about the tribal or ethnic make-up of an area, the local history, the community's businesses, and a dozen other vital factors that a stateside campaign manager would deem absolutely essential to know.

*In an insurgency, if we hope to influence an area, or city, or portion of a valley, we have to know in exquisite detail who lives there and what is of vital importance to them.* This is no different from a politician in Iowa or Pennsylvania who seeks the support of voters in either urban or rural constituencies.

Here again, the difference between urban and rural identities must be taken into account. The question for the practitioner is "who identifies with whom?" In his intriguing study, *Blood and Belonging*, author Michael Ignatiev arrived at the conclusion that individuals will look either to a civic "nation" (such as a country having national symbols and shared history) or to an ethnic group (kinship ties) for a sense of identity, of belonging:

But belonging also means being recognized and being understood. As Isaiah Berlin has written in *Two Concepts of Liberty*, when I am among my own people, "*they understand me, as I understand them; and this understanding creates within me a sense of being somebody in the world.*" To belong is to understand the tacit codes of the people you live with; it is to know that you will be understood without having to explain yourself. People, in short, "speak your language." This is why, incidentally, the protection and defense of a nation's language is such a deeply emotional nationalist cause, for it is language, more than land and history, that provides the essential form of belonging, which is to be understood. One can, of course, be understood in languages and in countries other than one's own: one can find belonging even in exile. But the nationalist claim is that full belonging, the warm sensation that people understand not merely what you say but what you mean, can come only when you are among your own people in your native land.<sup>35</sup>

A sociologist would hold that each person, even a person of multi-cultural background, is a member of some "primary identity group." That could well be a tribe. Or it could be a larger ethnic group, such as Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and so on. Or again, identity could be based on occupational or professional lines. It could be a religious group. And it may be some other factor that ties the individual to a larger group where he feels he "belongs." Whatever the case, an individual would not have to explain himself to other members of his primary group.

Since the practitioner's goal is to influence certain individuals and groups, it follows that his challenge is to identify as precisely as possible the "primary group" to which his target audience

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<sup>35</sup> Ignatiev, p. 10. In developing his thesis, Ignatiev suggests that a person might consider himself a member of a group that defines itself by "civic nationalism" – attachment to certain political or symbolic institutions irrespective of language, religion, or race (p. 6.) But he also lays out "ethnic nationalism" as an alternative. This form of identity is based on commonality of race, religion, language and other inherited factors (p. 7.) He concludes this section (p. 9) by saying: "*Faced with a situation of political and economic chaos, people wanted to know whom to trust, and whom to call their own. Ethnic nationalism provided an answer that was intuitively obvious: Only trust those of your own blood.*"

belongs. It is not enough to say, for example, “women.” The question should be put: “what kind of women?” This forces the practitioner to become precise. He would answer: “Politically moderate Sunni Muslim women with higher education living in Kabul.” Even this refinement might not be enough. But you would have to agree that messages directed to ALL women would be so general and watered down that they would have no meaningful impact. “All women” is simply not a viable target. This is because there are illiterate women, women who live elsewhere than Kabul, Shi’ite women, and women who are ardent Sunni extremists.

Why should this specificity be necessary? The answer should be obvious. The needs of various target audiences are different, just as are their characteristics. Messages and activities, known by propagandists as “moves,”<sup>36</sup> that are crafted for one target audience may have absolutely no impact on other, even similar, audiences. Worse, a message that is hazy, bland and store brand generic, will have the impact of a poached egg hitting a soft pillow. It will be worse than useless. Precision is required.

When propaganda is addressed to a crowd, it must touch each individual in that crowd, in that whole group. To be effective, it must give the impression of being personal, for we must never forget that the mass is composed of individuals, and is in fact nothing but assembled individuals.<sup>37</sup>

In defining a target audience, practitioners must start with the obvious factors: physical location, ethnicity, socio-educational standing, and income. This is no different from what any competent political campaign staff would be doing to understand the general background of voters in a particular electoral district. Without such understanding, conducting any campaign would be a feckless waste of time and money.

But the analyst must go further, much further. *With whom does his target audience identify? Why? Are there other factors that would allow us to refine the target even more precisely? What issues are foremost in the minds of members of this target audience?* We will return to issues and motivation, but I must make the point that, if you hope to be effective, *you must know your target audience better than it knows itself.* You must know who it is, where it is, what it is, what it believes, what it hopes, and what it fears. Everything.

If there is one truly fatal flaw in U.S. Army and CIA influence programs, it is the fact that neither invests much effort in the admittedly time-consuming and challenging process of analyzing target audiences thoroughly.<sup>38</sup> Rank amateurs playing at propaganda prefer to charge right off and roll the printing presses featuring drawings of Osama bin-Laden with devil’s horns or broadcast details about his supposed bowel ailments on their radio networks. How is this pseudo-propaganda supposed to motivate a target audience? For that matter, who is the target audience? How is this “information” relevant to its needs?

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<sup>36</sup> See Annex B – Glossary. As in chess, a “move” is a basic element of a propaganda campaign. It is any single propaganda action, whether using print media, electronic dissemination, or direct propaganda such as a speech, play or skit, or any other means of influencing a target audience. As in chess, “moves” are used in a coordinated way as part of a strategy to checkmate (defeat) one’s adversary.

<sup>37</sup> Jacques Ellul, p. 7

<sup>38</sup> During a January 2010 visit to Afghanistan, Dr. Munoz reports that some units do make an attempt to analyze target audiences, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

If little or no effort is made to define and then fully understand target audiences and their real needs, it follows that messages will be “all things to all men” and therefore of little value to anyone. Of what earthly use is a poster of a devil-horned Osama? What is a person seeing this poster supposed to do aside from scratch one’s head in confusion? Did anyone actually think about what Objective such a poster would serve, or how it would motivate anyone to do anything that advances the target to that Objective?<sup>39</sup>

A final word of caution is in order. All too often, “IO” people fall in love with their pet technical capabilities and are seduced into shaping “campaigns” around these capabilities while forgetting that the *purpose of propaganda is to influence target audiences – people*. This stands the process on its head. Always remember that campaigns are built around people, not technical capabilities. Start with thorough analysis of your target audience. If that analysis reveals that a certain technical capability (Internet, motion pictures, etc.) is appropriate for that audience, then and only then should you make use of it in your campaign. Technical capabilities support campaigns; they should never shape them.

## **9. Linkage, OR How We are Tied Together**

Let us begin by making a sweeping statement that is nonetheless 100% true: *“any given district, city, province, or nation is the sum total of its target audiences.”* To prove this sweeping assertion, consider any precinct, town, county or other geographical entity you wish. Ask yourself: “who lives here?” The answer will be “many people.” But the real answer is “many *types* of people.” In the case of St. Louis, for example, there are wards where the predominant groups are of Italian, German, African-American, and Eastern European Jewish heritage.

Sections of town are white stocking (wealthy), middle class residential, slum areas (yes, sorry, but it is true), and high-rise apartments. Living in St. Louis are persons with advanced degrees, high school diplomas, and people whose schooling ended in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Different types of businessmen, artisans and professionals may be identified. I think the point has been made. If you add together the Italian Americans, the bankers and shopkeepers, Cardinals fans, riverboat gamblers and all the rest you get...St. Louis. The city is the sum total of its many target audiences.

Now, the question arises, if I am a candidate for mayor of St. Louis, must I get ALL the voters in the entire city to vote only for ME? The answer, obviously, is “no.” To win your new job at City Hall, all you have to do is gather more votes than the other guy (or other guys, if several candidates are running.) *You need broad support, not universal support and should not expect to collect 100% of the votes.*

Your campaign manager will tell you a few things about the realities of ward politics in St. Louis. Certain groups are tight knit, more politically active (that is, they turn out to vote in greater numbers than do other groups), tend to contribute more money to campaigns, and are

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<sup>39</sup> Author saw such posters distributed in eastern Afghanistan in 2005 and recalls “propaganda” distributed concerned with OBL’s alleged physical problems. All of this material was irrelevant to any meaningful political warfare campaign. Even as “denigration material” it was worthless.

vociferous on public issues. Certain other groups are less active politically (seldom turning out to vote), contribute little to campaign coffers, and have little apparent interest in civic matters. If you were the candidate, with which groups would you think it more useful to spend your precious Quality Time?

A candidate will actively compete for the support of those groups (read: target audiences) that promise the most political pay-off on Election Day, and will tend to spend less time with apathetic or uninterested groups (read: target audiences.) *The lesson in this is that not all target audiences are created equal.* Nor should your energy and attention be spent working on all possible target audiences. Work only on those that really count.

Now, does this basic lesson in political action apply in Afghanistan? Let's see if this general approach can be applied in Khowst Province, for example. Khowst Province has a population of about 639,000, the majority being members of the Zadran, Tani, Sabari, Mangal and several other tribes. About 160,000 people live in the provincial capital, the city of Khowst.<sup>40</sup>

Can these residents of Khowst be categorized into "target audiences" based upon our principle of "*groups having common characteristics, attitudes, and needs?*" Most assuredly, they can be. The tribal areas are obvious. We have taken pains to show that tribes share "blood and belonging" and constitute two thirds of the province's population. That is to say that, for approximately 480,000 souls, tribes will be the "primary identity group." Just remember that Zadran tribesmen are not Sabaris, and that Mangals are not Tani! They sometimes do not play well together in the same sandbox.

The city of Khowst is a bit more complicated. But if you drive through town you will see quite a number of small shops, car repair and parts shops, an open air produce market, a couple "lumber yards," a university, several mosques, and a fair number of physicians, attorneys, artisans, and others. Many of these people have morphed into "Khowstis" as their tribal identities fade with the passage of years. But others retain strong ties to the rural area (and tribe) of their birth.

Is Khowst Province the "sum total of its target audiences?" Again, most assuredly it is. If all the tribes, the merchants, shopkeepers, university students, and others are added up, they constitute the body politic of the province. Rural residents are almost all engaged in farming of some kind, especially in wheat cultivation. Tribal members also engage in cutting wood on the slopes of the hills surrounding the "Khowst Bowl." This wood is taken to the "lumber yards" in Khowst city where it is sold.

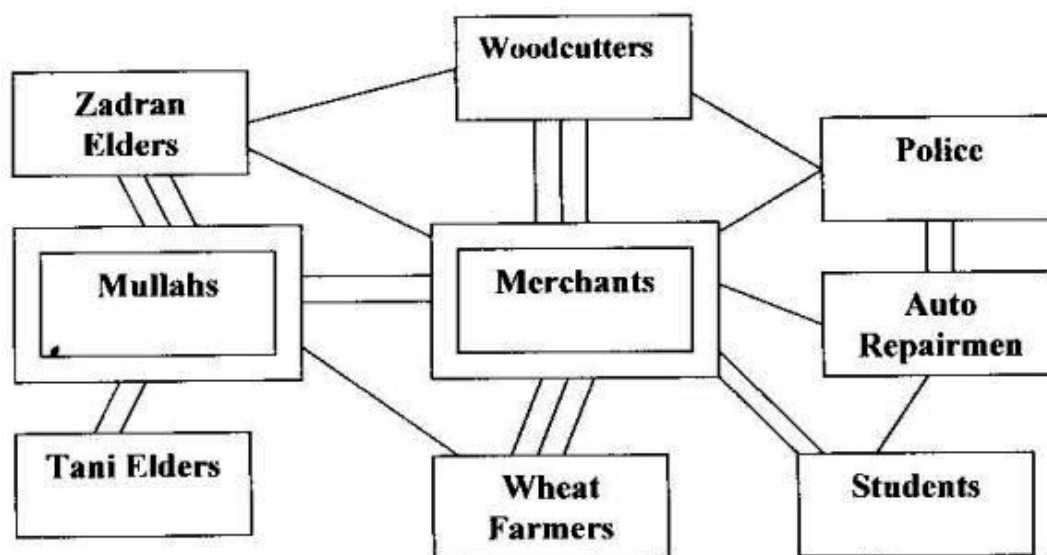
Now, what has been hinted at is that many of these target audiences are linked together either by economics, heritage, dialect, or by shared interests. Some audiences are more closely linked together than others – a good example being the woodcutters and the wood merchants in town. Cutters depend on the merchants for a market for their wood; in turn, the merchants rely on the cutters for a continuous supply of long cedar poles they can sell in town. It may well be that woodcutters are not so closely tied, for example, to university students. But the students may possibly be closely linked to merchants and professionals, and certainly to teachers and other

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<sup>40</sup> Source: Wikipedia, data as of 26 October 2009.

student groups. In some way or other, all target audiences are linked – perhaps through other audiences – to each and every other target audience.

If an analyst were to draw a link diagram of the relationships that exist between the numerous target audiences, he would find that some target audiences have links to a wide number of other audiences. These hyper-networked or “key” target audiences therefore have the potential to be more influential since they have ties to a greater number of groups having economic, political or other significance in Khowst Province.



**Hypothetical Line Diagram of Target Audience Relationships**

The chart above is a hypothetical line diagram, very loosely based on Khowst Province, showing nine genuine target audiences but with notional relationships. Target audiences are given double (or even triple) boxes depending upon their size and importance. The targets are all linked, either *directly* by single, double, or triple lines, or *indirectly* through other audiences. For example, the auto repairmen are indirectly linked to the Tani Elders through the merchants and, ultimately, the mullahs. (It is presumed that not too many Tani Elders routinely have their cars repaired in town; hence, their indirect relationship is likely to be a weak one.) A single line signifies the existence of a relationship, a double line indicates a strong relationship, and a triple line suggests that the relationship between the audiences is very strong. In this hypothetical example, we would infer that the two most influential groups are the merchants and the mullahs – the mullahs especially with tribal groups, and the merchants tied more strongly to suppliers (woodcutters and wheat farmers) and customers, but also on the technical side (auto repairmen.) The merchants also have a close tie to the students since many students are the children of the merchants. A line diagram of this type can be used to identify the audiences that should be selected as the key targets for sustained, focused influence operations – counting on the “pull” of certain key audiences to bring along other groups with whom they are closely tied.

Consider the Mullah Shura of Khowst Province. With a membership of about 150 mullahs from all the districts within the province, the leaders of the Mullah Shura have links with almost every other target audience. They have a presence in both the city and in rural areas.<sup>41</sup> Mullahs are distributed everywhere there is a neighborhood or a small rural community.

<sup>41</sup> There are far more than 150 mullahs in Khowst. However, the Shura – a council – is their representative body and is organized with three or four senior clerics who are its spokesmen. Like a “guild,” it speaks for the entire corps of mullahs in Khowst. It also exerts some “discipline” on its members.

Now let us apply what we learned earlier about the sources of the mullahs' power. We note that mullahs as a group possess legitimate power as the appointed spiritual officials in various congregations. Some of them possess referent power as being strong orators or "connected" to personages of influence. It is even possible that some clerics may have reward or expert power. Whatever the precise mix of factors possessed by the target audience as a whole (that is, the mullahs of Khowst Province) or any individual mullah, I think you would agree that these folks constitute a truly "key" target audience. And within such an influential body, there are "key communicators" whose opinions carry great weight with the members of the Shura and with mullahs generally.

Bernays again provides an observation that merits our attention: "*The leaders who lend their authority to any propaganda campaign will do so only if it can be made to touch their own interests.*"<sup>42</sup> The key element, then, is the self-interest of the key communicator.

But let's drop back a step. Influential as they are, would we wish to build a campaign on just one target audience? Probably not. So, we would look to our link diagram to find two or three additional "key" target audiences with strong ties to other groups in the province. Perhaps we might consider the merchants and moneylenders in town. Or the transportation people who keep the jingle trucks running – and thus exports and imports flowing. Possibly we should be looking at teachers of various levels – primary, high school, college. Teachers in many societies have credibility and stature. Teachers certainly have broad linkage, for students normally have parents and, in Third World countries, extended families.

People to-day are largely uninterested in politics and their interest in the issues of the campaign must be secured by coordinating it with their personal interests. The public is made up of interlocking groups – economic, social, religious, educational, cultural, racial, collegiate, local, sports, and hundreds of others.<sup>43</sup>

Understanding the linkage between key target audiences is absolutely critical to the success of a political warfare campaign. *It is not necessary to address all audiences in a given district – only the most influential ones.* And these audiences must be addressed with specifics that speak to their real or perceived needs and interests. By hitting the "right" audiences hard, and repeatedly, with motivational messages rather than pabulum, once mobilized, it is possible to have these audiences "pull" their linked audiences along with them. And the key to motivating a well-connected target audience is to identify and win over its leaders based on their real interests.

We will discuss building campaigns a bit later. But for now it is enough to understand that the local political units, whatever they may be called, are the building blocks of "national" governments. Communities [hamlets, districts, provinces, etc.] are themselves nothing more nor less than the sum total of the target audiences who live in them. Not all target audiences are of

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<sup>42</sup> Bernays, p. 59; see also Jacques Ellul, p. 96. Ellul states: "The leader or expert who enjoys authority and prestige among the mass is the man who best speaks for that mass. The ordinary man must see himself reflected in his leader."

<sup>43</sup> Bernays, p. 102. Bernays was writing about American political attitudes in 1928, but the key point is that even in the United States, target audiences are linked or "interlocking."



equal importance politically. But those having the widest influence and strongest linkage to other audiences are vital in building a meaningful campaign. Within the target audiences are certain individuals who possess a special degree of influence with members of the group. These are the “key communicators” whose interests must be served in order to propel a campaign to success. Seek them out, get to know these people well, win them over, and if you have chosen the right people you will find that they have a “force multiplier effect” that can change the political complexion of your entire area of operations. *Remember: it is your task to gain and hold the support of the people.*

## 10. When Target Audiences’ Interests Clash

Not all target audiences have harmonious relationships. In some cases, relationships are colored by prejudice and what we might consider blind hatred. Between some tribes, for example, there has been a kind of Hatfield-McCoy relationship for decades. In the case of urban target audiences, competition also may exist between economic or political groups that resent any gains by a rival (competitive) group. There is a firm zero-sum belief that a rival’s gains must have been made at the first group’s expense. For example, proprietors of madrassas who see primary age children (especially boys) sent to secular government schools may not be enamored of the teachers whom they regard as rivals. Their interests clash.

Dr. Arturo G. Munoz, a noted scholar with RAND Corporation, has done pioneering work on the broad tribal rivalries that exist in Helmand Province. Although small groups of Hazaras, Baloch, and Tajiks live in Helmand, the majority of residents are Durrani Pashtuns. The Durrani, however, are divided into two broad groups, the Panjpai (or Panjpao) and Zirak. These broad divisions are further subdivided into tribes as follows:

<u>Panjpai (Panjpao)</u>	<u>Zirak</u>
Nurzais	Popalzais
Alizais	Barakzais
Ishaqzais	Alikozais
	Achakzais <sup>44</sup>

What is politically – and therefore operationally – important about this division between the two broad elements of the Durrani Pashtuns is that the Panjpai generally support the insurgents whereas, typically, the Zirak are in the pro-government column. The fact that this is so has nothing to do with differences in religion (both elements are Sunni) nor with ethnicity (both elements speak the very same dialect of Pashto.) Rather, the rivalry has to do with centuries-old contests over land and trade routes. The Zirak branch, being the stronger, has gradually taken all the most fertile land and also control of most roads. The Panjpai, the weaker of the brothers, have been forced into the hills and less productive lands. It will be seen at once that a

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<sup>44</sup> See also Caroe, op.cit., Section One, “The Genealogies.” Author is indebted to Dr. Arturo Munoz for permission to cite his research work here in brief. Dr. Munoz spoke at the National Defense University to the “Afghanistan-Pakistan Foundation Course” on 8 October 2009. The Popalzais have a subtribe, the Saddozais, who founded Afghanistan and were its kings until 1818. Hamid Karzai, president of Afghanistan, is a Popalzai Durrani Pashtun. The Barakzais, through their subtribe, the Muhammadzais, provided Afghanistan’s monarchs until 1973 when the country became a republic. (Source: Caroe.)

practitioner who is ignorant of this background could make serious blunders in conducting influence campaigns in Helmand.<sup>45</sup>

It will also be understood at once that Psyop analysis of Helmand Province will show a completely different pattern of target audiences than that found in Khowst Province. As mentioned, there are elements of ethnic groups (minorities in Helmand) that are not found at all in Khowst. These are the Baloch, Tajiks, and Hazaras. A practitioner would be well-advised to study the “common characteristics, attitudes, and needs” of each and every ethnic group. All are potentially important to the outcome in Helmand.

Although I do not wish to sidetrack us from our main theme, I am obliged make the point that a commander should know at once that Tajiks speak a dialect of ancient Persian and are culturally akin to the Iranians, the Baloch are a tribal group whose language is of the Indic group, and the Hazaras, believed to be descendants of Mongol invaders, speak their own language and are predominantly Shi’ite by religion. There is much more to be understood about each of these ethnic groups, but a commander who must operate in Helmand Province is in danger of making grave mistakes if he does not understand these and other cultural points. This is of direct operational importance.

Now, the point of this brief excursion into tribal politics and consideration of interests that clash is to alert the practitioner that he must be intensely aware of the rivalries and the reasons for these rivalries. A practitioner must be mindful of Napoleon’s observation that “*A man will fight harder for his interests than his rights.*” It may be necessary to “take sides” in a political contest between one group and another, but it simply will not do to be totally unaware of rivalries and stumble blindly into these collisions by accident.

Political warfare is, by definition, combat. While we must be careful not to go blundering about – and making new enemies in the process – we also should not be afraid to go bare knuckle in support of the interests of target audiences whose support we need. Famed labor leader Samuel Gompers made this point very clear: “*We reward our friends and we punish our enemies.*”<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, we are commanded to “take sides” in certain circumstances. To quote from General McChrystal’s guidance: “*Insist [that] government officials serve the people; support those who do. Confront corrupt officials. Protecting the people requires protection from physical harm, corruption and abuse of power.*”<sup>47</sup> It is clear that military units and civilian officials must take sides when it is necessary to do so. Standing idly by, wringing our hands but doing nothing, merely tells the people that we do not care enough about their welfare to take their side. *And if we do not take their side in their vital matters, why in the world should they take our side when it matters to us?*

Taking sides is unavoidable in some disputes, but we should do so with our eyes wide open, fully cognizant of *whose* side we are taking and *why*. Those tribes or other groups supporting our

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<sup>45</sup> Not all Zirak are pro-government, nor all Panjpai pro-Taliban, but in general, this is the political division.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Gompers in 1926, quoted in Greene, p. 107.

<sup>47</sup> GEN Stanley A. McChrystal, “ISAF Counterinsurgency Guidance: Key Points,” quoted at Frontispiece. Col. Newsham notes that security is an indispensable part of political warfare.

enemies also must be considered to be adversaries – they must therefore have their interests suffer for rendering aid and comfort to those who are bent on killing or injuring us. By contrast, those groups and individuals who support us deserve what rewards and benefits we can bestow. *A “strategy of incentives,” is no strategy at all if there are no rewards for groups supporting “our” side, or correspondingly tough economic and political penalties for groups who support our enemies.* That’s politics, whether armed or not.

## 11. Some Assembly Required

We have now taken a look at the “building blocks” that we have before us – the pieces from which we will construct an effective political warfare effort. We are not quite ready yet to discuss how to go about building a propaganda campaign, but we can inventory the materials we have to work with. The raw materials we have are the communities and target audiences in our Area of Operations, and their welter of hopes, needs, prejudices, fantasies, hatreds, and desires. But if we hope to motivate these people, we must first understand them.

As we have seen, some building blocks fit together beautifully – they have linkage and mutual affinity. Other pieces do not. These will have linkage, but conflicting interests. We also note that some target audiences are highly influential, others less so. Some are numerous while others are small. The target audiences in one community may be quite different ethnically or culturally from the audiences found in another. It is often the case that, like the Algonquins and Iroquois from our own history, some target audiences do not play well together in the same sandbox. If we find ourselves backing the one, we risk alienating the other.<sup>48</sup> So be it; that may be unavoidable. But backing certain target audiences and not others should be done on the basis of the political objective of the war and not done simply from ignorance.

We have also discerned the fact that within each target audience there are special persons whose opinions shape the views of their compatriots. These “key communicators” have one or more sources of personal power that identify them as Opinion Makers.

But while we are becoming familiar with the structure of the communities and influential persons with whom we must deal, and whom we seek to influence, there is one important element still missing. In modern Computerspeak we might call this the “software” of society. Back in 1928, Edward Bernays described this element as societal “steam.”

It is not sufficient to understand only the mechanical structure of society, the grouping and cleavages and loyalties. An engineer may know all about the cylinders and pistons of a locomotive, but unless he knows how steam behaves under pressure he cannot make his engine run. Human desires are the steam which makes the social machine work. Only by understanding them {human desires, ed.} can the propagandist control that vast, loose-jointed mechanism which is modern society.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> As did Samuel Sieur de la Champaign in 1607 when he backed the Algonquins against their hereditary enemies the Iroquois, thus winning the friendship and loyalty of the Algonquins, but stirring the undying hatred of the Iroquois – both consequences having enormous relevance for the history of North America.

<sup>49</sup> Bernays, op.cit.

Bernays' "steam" consists of the aspirations, hopes, fears, resentments, and uncertainties felt by target audiences as a result of their specific experiences and conditions.

The U.S. Army "IO" people routinely make four errors in their attempts to influence audiences in Afghanistan. Each flaw dooms our "IO campaigns" to failure.

The first fatal flaw is failure to thoroughly analyze each and every target audience in the Area of Operations, and to appraise which key target audiences are the ones that merit our operational attention. This vital first step is routinely ignored. Instead, we rush to "get something out." In effect, we measure "inputs" (leaflets disseminated, broadcasts made) as if these had any relevance whatsoever to the effectiveness of a campaign. As a consequence, the messages produced and disseminated are irrelevant not only to the needs of a given group, but often are culturally and psychologically inappropriate.

The second flaw is to use themes and even art styles that are Western, not indigenous. A local can tell when something is "foreign" in appearance, just as we can identify artwork or text that is not "American." Something that is alien is not readily accepted in any community, and it should not surprise us that even a truthful and compelling message will be rejected not on its merits, but on its origin. There is a credibility problem.

The third fatal flaw in our messaging is to project *only what we want, not what the locals want*. Well, how many times have your children enthusiastically "hopped to" and done something simply because YOU want it done? Not bloody often. Yet we expect that if WE tell someone to do what we want, they will instantly comply with our wishes. Don't our propagandists have small children at home to teach them this lesson?

And the fourth flaw is *failure to integrate each and every message and action into one coherent, fully orchestrated propaganda campaign*. Our efforts are largely piecemeal and spasmodic. We will make a certain broadcast. Or issue a poster. But how are all these various and disparate activities woven into a coherent whole? They are not.

Propaganda must be total. The propagandist must utilize all of the technical means at his disposal – the press, radio, TV, movies, posters, meetings, door-to-door canvassing. Modern propaganda must utilize all of these media. There is no propaganda as long as one makes use, in sporadic fashion and at random, of a newspaper article here, a poster or radio program there, organizes a few meetings and lectures, writes a few slogans on walls; that is not propaganda.<sup>50</sup>

Going back to Bernays for a moment, even if we did know "*all about the cylinders and pistons*" of our target audiences (and we don't) we clearly have not done our homework so far as understanding how the "societal steam" works. Is it any wonder, therefore, that our propaganda locomotive is still sitting dead-lined at the roundhouse?

Let's take a look at what we are doing and why we are so ineffective.

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<sup>50</sup> Ellul, p. 9

First, we assume that one broad, rather generic “message” is applicable in all places and at all times. Thus, our printing presses roll out hundreds, perhaps thousands of posters that supposedly will have “impact” over everyone in the entire country, and our radio stations pump out the same message to all – basically telling anyone who listens *what it is that we want*. This approach assumes that each and every group in a given country would have exactly the same interests we do (or no interests whatsoever.) Moreover, it assumes that a group in one valley or hamlet receives information and will react in precisely the same manner as would all groups in all other valleys or hamlets. The problem is that, as in shoe sales, one size does not fit all. Propaganda must be carefully, even exquisitely tailored for selected target audiences and their differing interests, attitudes, and needs.

A message that means anything means nothing. We cannot be, and should not attempt to be, “all things to all men.”

A related problem is that broad appeals are gelatinous in nature. They lack any real relevance to the concrete, daily needs of the people. It is not enough to ballyhoo some generic theme like “Resist Al-Qaeda!” and expect that such an exciting message will immediately resonate with all audiences and cause them to rise up in righteous anger at the AQ interlopers. *Audiences are far more likely to react when a message has clear relevance to its core interests*. This is the classic “What’s in it for me?” If your message has no direct relevance to my needs, it will have no impact on my actions.

Propaganda must also be continuous, rigorous, and coordinated if it is to have any real impact. As Ellul has said, sporadic efforts such as odd posters, speeches, and perhaps a radio broadcast now and then, do not constitute effective propaganda. Each “move” must be woven into a continuous, mutually supporting, highly focused campaign. Propaganda operations must carefully integrate all “moves” – print, electronic, or direct – into a coherent whole. (We will examine this concept in Section 17.) Sadly, the American tendency with “IO” is to be spasmodic, fragmented, unfocused, *ad hoc*.

Finally, in addition to projecting what we want – rather than what a key target audience necessarily wants – we do so from a distinctly “American” perspective, not from an Afghan standpoint. This failing may be cultural myopia on our part, or it could be simple sloth. It ignores basic human psychology that, with the exception of Mother Theresa, all human beings are more concerned with themselves than with the needs of others. And it ignores Jacques Ellul’s observation that propaganda is most effective when addressed by nationals to their fellow citizens.<sup>51</sup>

As we prepare to study the operational aspects of influence, we would do well first to take a hard look at ourselves in the mirror. I think many, if not most, objective observers would admit that our efforts to compete with “Taliwood” have been unsuccessful. If we are to pull up our bootstraps and improve, we must be honest with ourselves and focus on what our competitors are doing well – and resolve that we can do better.

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<sup>51</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda, The Formation of Men’s Attitudes*: “We are facing here the greatest obstacle to psychological action: it can be fully effective only in the hands of nationals addressing themselves to their fellow citizens.” p. 298

It is fair to say that the Neo-Taliban has modernized its propaganda effort over the last five years. And although the Taliban lacks an attractive political program having broad popular appeal, it nevertheless must be admitted that the insurgent movement has presented its arguments in a coherent fashion that is both culturally appropriate and carefully shaped to influence selected target audiences in Afghanistan.

We must go and do likewise.

## 12. Does Control Equate with Support?

There are some who assert that “support follows control” in insurgencies. While this assertion may be true in some cases, we should be wary of accepting it as a “principle” or Eternal Verity applicable in all situations. As is so often the case in insurgencies, there are really very few “principles” that are true in all places and at all times. The best that can be safely asserted is that in insurgencies, some things may be true in some places and in certain circumstances. But they may not be true in other places or other circumstances.

Consider, for example, Japanese control over large areas of North China from 1937 to 1945. Can it be said that the Japanese army ever commanded the support of the Chinese peasantry even though the Japanese controlled much of the territory for eight years? Or again, in French Indochina we note that many thousands of Vietnamese remained in areas such as the Red River delta controlled by the French army – but did these people come to support the continuation of French colonial rule? We might further test the “control precedes support” assertion in other case studies such as British-held Ireland, French Algeria, Somoza’s Nicaragua, or even parts of the Thirteen Colonies under British occupation during the American Revolution (also an insurgency.)

Mencius observed that: *“When by force one subdues men, they do not submit to him in heart. They submit because their strength is not adequate to resist.”*<sup>52</sup>

The question of physical control and popular support for an occupier has more to do with pre-existing attitudes of the people than it does with the physical fact of occupation by an armed force. The sentiments of the people will trump “control” in most cases. The Poles in Warsaw were no more inclined to support the Germans (and later the Soviets) simply because they were occupied. In the former Soviet empire, we have also the examples of the German uprising in 1953 or the Hungarian rebellion of 1956. Control was total, but support never followed. Even in non-violent political movements, Gandhi’s celebrated civil disobedience strategy was effective in undermining British rule in India. The British might well control India in the military and administrative sense, but millions of Indians nevertheless would not support the British Raj. *In all of these cases, it may be said that it was the collective attitude of the people against the occupier despite his physical control that determined the ultimate outcome of the political contest.* Even in cases such as Poland, East Germany or Hungary where Soviet tanks quickly put down the rebellion and re-established “control,” the Soviets never succeeded in winning popular support.

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<sup>52</sup> Mencius, quoted in James Legge (trans.) The Chinese Classics, Vol. II: The Works of Mencius.

Perhaps the power of popular will in shaping events – especially a spirit of resistance despite physical control by an enemy – was best expressed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who observed that “*what the heart rejects, the head will not accept.*”<sup>53</sup>

So, if we cannot accept “support follows control” as a dependable “principle,” where does that leave us? I suppose it tells us that we must seek another way of explaining why human beings will rise to the support of certain Causes but obstinately resist others despite the imposition of physical control. I think that deeply held popular sentiments are far more relevant to understanding popular support than are external controls. It is what the heart accepts that determines what the head will think and the hand will do.

It may be that strongly held beliefs – whether based on a political philosophy, religious principles, perceived kinship, deep resentment of outsiders, or even prejudice – shapes “support” even if a regime or occupying force may control the territory and persons residing in a given area. *It is what people come to believe that motivates them to action, not the fact of captivity or occupation.* The spirit of resistance, once roused, is very difficult for an occupier to quench, despite totalitarian control such as that exercised by the Nazis or the Soviet Communists. Even though a spirit of resistance may sputter and appear to go out, at any moment it may suddenly break out in flames. Anyone familiar with the Battle of Algiers (1957) – the French believing they had won the war by suppressing Algerian nationalism in favor of continued French colonial rule – also is aware that Algiers erupted in violent demonstrations against the French in 1960. Support may, or may not, follow control. We are better advised to study popular attitudes than means of control.

This is what our second President, John Adams, wrote in 1818 about American public sentiments in the 1770s: “*The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people.*”<sup>54</sup> Sound familiar?

## **Closing Thoughts for Part One**

Although we cannot rule out the possibility of future conventional armed operations on the Korean peninsula or in parts of the Middle East, the probability is that the United States will face insurgencies and “low-intensity conflict” given the trends in human misery throughout the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The point is to be prepared for either challenge and not to waste the hard-won lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq as we wasted those from the past. Twice in living memory, our policy community and its military establishment deliberately erased our base of knowledge for coping successfully with insurgency.

The nature of “low-intensity conflict” makes imperative the primacy of so-called “soft power” over weaponry. Chief among the “soft power” elements are well-crafted efforts to influence

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<sup>53</sup> Author believes, but cannot verify, that former Secretary of State George P. Shultz used a version of Schopenhauer’s observation in a speech given in early 1986. Not well known is the fact that George Shultz served in World War II as a U.S. Marine Corps officer in the Pacific Theater from 1942 to 1945.

<sup>54</sup> John Adams in a letter to H. Niles, 13 February 1818, in Adams, p. 266.

selected audiences in our Area of Operations. We must swiftly identify our natural allies, but we must also develop ways to win more such allies among the people.

Influence involves far more than the mere provision of information. Information has its place, but the central purpose of *influence* is to galvanize public opinion and motivate it to take specified actions that contribute to a clearly identified policy goal.

Popular support for a Cause or political Idea comes from within and cannot be imposed from without. Prolonged physical control has potential to weaken support for a certain Cause or Idea, but unless control is accompanied by vigorous, positive mobilization of the people *around a more attractive Cause or Idea*, control ultimately will fail. This was amply demonstrated by five decades of Soviet control in Eastern Europe which utterly failed to win even a whisper of popular support.

The propagandist has certain “building blocks” to work with. These are called “target audiences” and they can be identified and defined based upon “common characteristics, attitudes, and needs.” Target audiences may be urban, rural, tribal, confessional, or occupational. Nearly all live in some form of community, whether tribal or urban, and these local governmental units are the building blocks of nations. If a propagandist hopes to motivate a target audience, he must first know it better than it knows itself. He must thoroughly analyze its wants, needs, hopes, fears, and so on, and then position himself to supply the answers and solutions needed – indeed, demanded – by the target audience. If the propagandist can so position himself, he can then motivate that group to act.

Target audiences are linked together – some very closely. It is therefore not necessary for the propagandist to address propaganda to each and every audience – only to carefully selected audiences that have exceptional linkage in a given society. Once these selected target audiences are set in motion, they will pull others along with whom they are linked.

The interests of some target audiences will inevitably clash. If at all possible, a propagandist should avoid being drawn into a collision between two audiences. However, when involvement is unavoidable, the propagandist must back the side that is best able to carry us forward to the attainment of our policy objective. Propaganda then must reinforce our “friends” and undercut our “enemies.”

Messages carefully crafted for a specific audience will resonate with that audience and possibly some other targets closely related to our selected audience. In general, the same messages will have little or no impact with other target audiences simply because they have different “characteristics, attitudes, and needs.” Even so, care must be taken to avoid language or promises that alienate audiences for whom the messages are not intended. It goes without saying that generic, pabulum messages addressed to no one in particular, and which touch no interests and address no relevant needs, will be Dead on Arrival precisely because they are irrelevant. These messages will certainly bore or annoy, but they will not motivate.

## **End of Part One**



## Applying Operational Thinking to the Blocks

*The pen is mightier than the sword.*

Edward Bulwer Lytton

***Richelieu***

*The very spring and root of honesty and virtue lie in good education.*

Plutarch

*Psychological forces exert a decisive influence on the elements involved in war.*

Karl von Clausewitz

### 13. Quo Vadis?

As mentioned, insurgency is armed politics – a struggle between two or more sides for the support and political allegiance of the people who live in a given area. It is therefore a competition between two (or more) views of “how the world should be” and the future shape of life and society. Often, but not always, each competitor will project a vision of his political program – the “political platform” espoused by the contenders.

The contenders, of course, are the leaders of the groups competing for power.

What is overlooked is that a propagandist is only a communicator, not a policymaker. In the commercial world, the “propagandists” are advertising executives and marketing specialists. They normally do not make or provide the products or services that they advertise. In politics, a “propagandist” is a member of a campaign staff seeking to have his candidate elected to office. Except in small town or precinct elections, the candidate is not usually his own campaign manager or propagandist.

*The point of this is that propagandists project the images and products given to them by others.* In an insurgency, propagandists working to overthrow an existing regime normally report to a central committee or some other body that makes policy. By the same token, propagandists supporting a targeted regime work for the leaders of the existing government. They take their guidance from top policymakers.

But without a product to advertise, or lacking a candidate to promote to the public, the propagandist must be idle. If there is no vision to propagate, no platform to propound, no Idea to spread methodically, there can be no propaganda. There must be something to project to the world. *If a candidate, corporation, or government has nothing to say, that is exactly what can and will be said on its behalf.*

The most critical problem for a regime battling a vigorous insurgent movement, the most important single action it can take, is to define its vision for its people. There must be a

compelling reason for a citizen to rise to the defense of his government. Absent a clear vision or some great purpose, there is nothing to fight for (much less, to die for.)

Normally, insurgents capture the high ground in the war of ideas before the regime even realizes that there is such a thing. Thus, as noted by General Sir Frank Kitson, the insurgency may at its inception lack weapons, manpower, and supplies, but it has the benefit of the all-important Cause for which it is fighting. The resources follow behind.

The government may start with plentiful weapons and supplies, but if its people have no vision before them, no compelling reason to fight and perhaps die, the resources available are irrelevant. The regime has thus failed before it began.

Elbert Hubbard once noted that: *"It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires great strength to decide on what to do."*<sup>55</sup> The key question that the leaders of a regime facing an insurgency must ask themselves is: *what do we stand for?* For without a clear and compelling purpose, it is impossible to rally the people to stand by the regime and willingly make the sacrifices that would be necessary.

In the current struggle for Afghanistan, we have heard the war aim of the insurgents. It is not an attractive vision, but it is a clear vision.

What is the competing vision of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan?<sup>56</sup>

The glaring absence of a compelling vision or noble war aim places both regime and our own propagandists in an unenviable position. What is there to promote? Consequently, American "propaganda" (so-called) wastes its time and energy busily attempting to "counter" the propaganda line of the insurgents. Indeed, formal guidance from both U.S. Army and CIA bosses specifically uses the term "counter." *This negative direction of our propaganda effort automatically yields the initiative to the insurgents.* Thus, in the propaganda war, we find ourselves merely reacting and following wherever the insurgents lead us – "countering" them all the way.

But wars are not won by "countering" an enemy. They are won by *beating* the enemy. The object is to bend the enemy to *our* will, *not to allow him to bend us to his will.*

"Countering" the opposing propaganda line buys us absolutely nothing and should be immediately stopped. Guidance should go forth that, henceforth, WE take the lead with positive propaganda campaigns and let our enemies try to counter us. We must project powerful and attractive ideas that our adversaries have no prayer of equaling.

Churchill did not spend his time "countering" Nazi threats or Hitler's arguments. He devoted his time to rallying the British people – each and every British subject – to take their active part in

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<sup>55</sup> Elbert Hubbard, p. 65.

<sup>56</sup> Dr. Munoz claims that the Afghan Government does have a "vision," but that it completely lacks credibility. Author is unaware of the government's vision.

national resistance. Hear the stirring vision put forward by one of the world's greatest leaders at the darkest and most desperate time in his nation's history:

Upon this battle [of Britain] depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: "This was their finest hour."<sup>57</sup>

Anyone not stirred by this ringing message is made of stone. The central message is clear: The British people will stand united behind their ancient institutions and will prevail against Nazi tyranny. Period. Are our Afghan allies at all capable of reaching these heights of inspiration to rally their people? Are we?

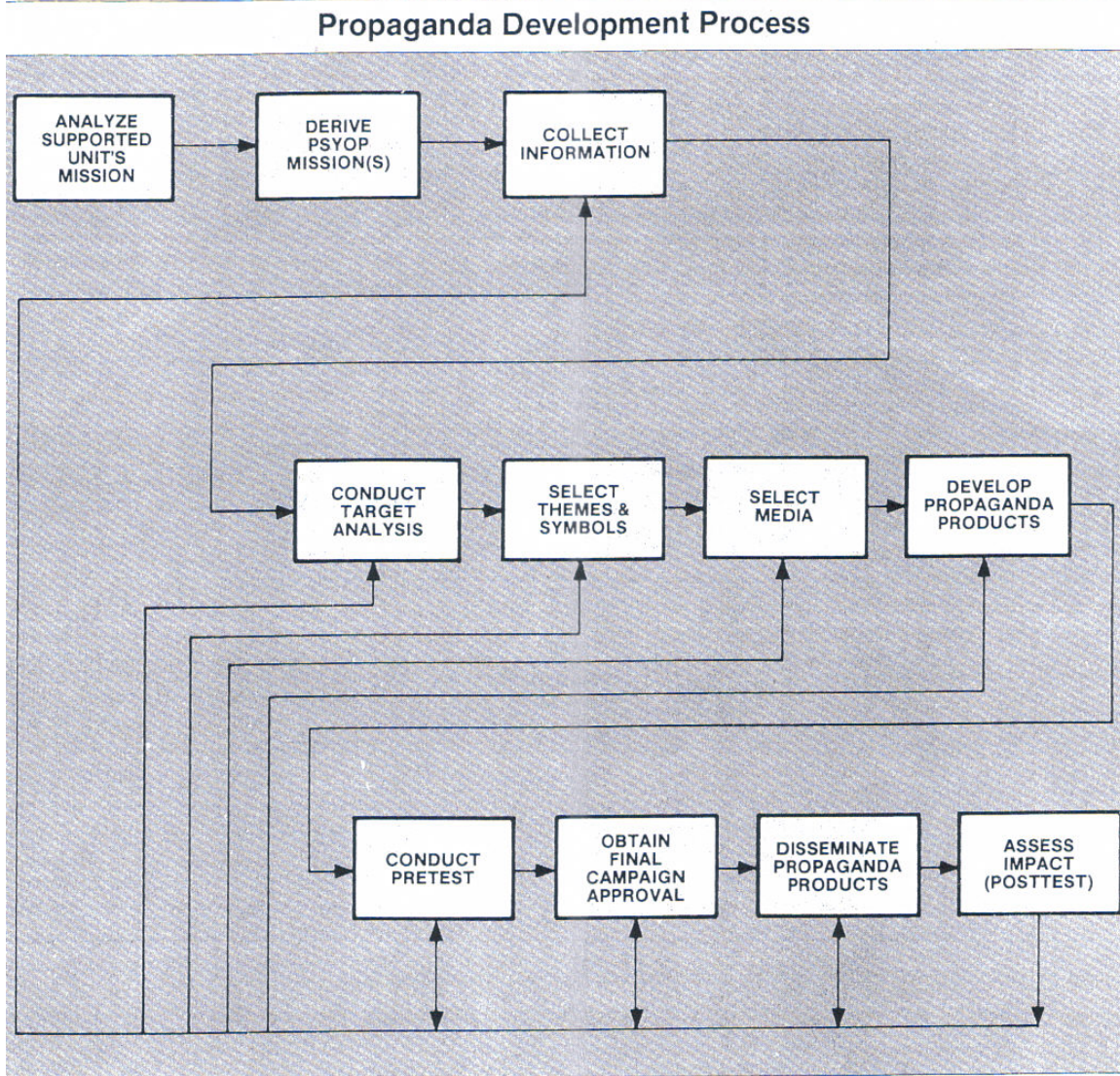
#### **14. The Psyop Cycle**

In formulating persuasive messages and deeds – in fact, for laying out a coherent, fully orchestrated campaign – some standard methodology must be used. In its hallmark FM 33-5, the U.S. Army prescribes a kind of flow diagram using lines and boxes.

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<sup>57</sup> Churchill, speech in the House of Commons, 18 June 1940

# U.S. Army Conception of the Propaganda Development Process FM 33-1

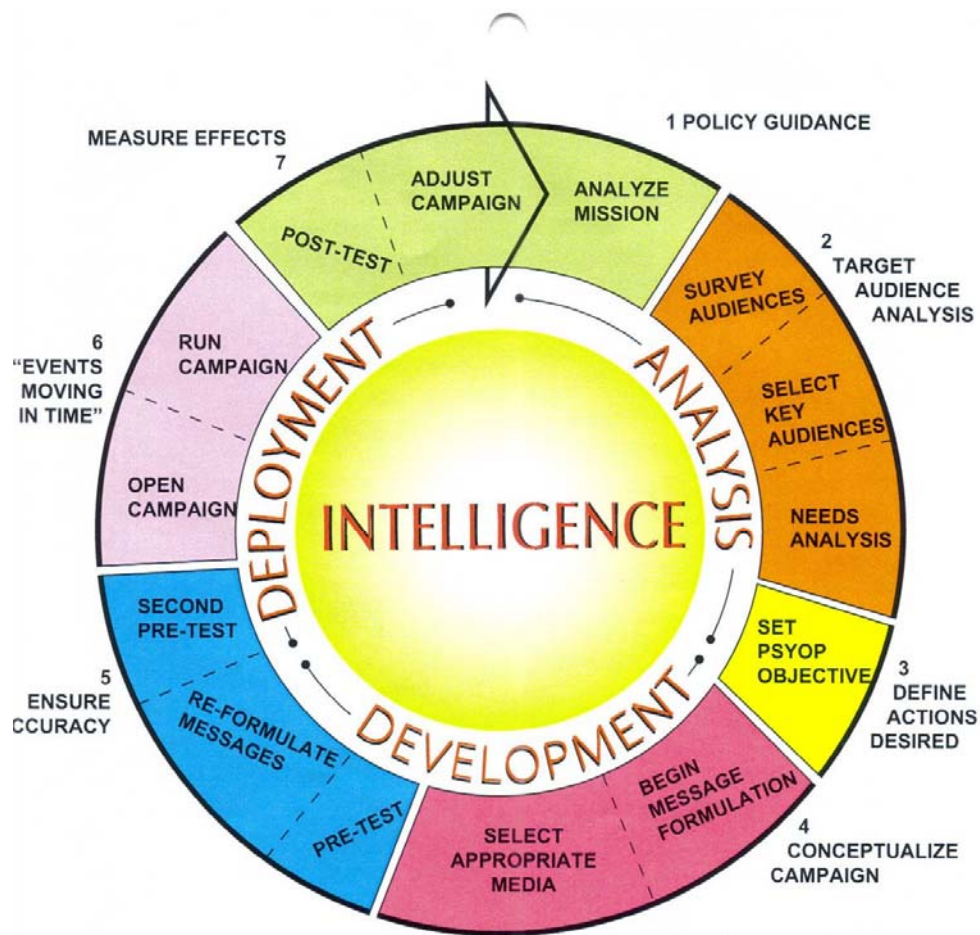


This conceptualization of the process is certainly a useful approach to the task. However, in the mid-1980s, it occurred to me that the process is cyclical rather than linear.<sup>58</sup> For that reason, it appears to me that a “cycle” is a better descriptor of the dynamic, ongoing process of developing both the individual “moves” and the campaign as a whole.

<sup>58</sup> Author is a 1976 graduate of the Psyop school at the U.S. Army John Fitzgerald Kennedy School of Special Warfare, and a 1986 graduate of the NATO Psyop school at Templer Barracks, Kent, U.K. He is therefore familiar with U.S. standard procedures.



The practitioner should use whichever conceptualization, the line diagram or the Psyop Cycle, that feels more comfortable and easy to use. What is important is not the type of model used to develop campaigns, but adherence to some methodical, step-by-step approach to the formulation of persuasive materials and motivational campaigns.



It should be understood that the cycle is in constant motion. Analysis is never complete; indeed, new target audiences are spotted and assessed constantly. “Old” target audiences – the subjects of ongoing or past campaigns – are regularly reassessed. When a practitioner has chosen a particular target audience and assessed it thoroughly, development of persuasive messages and deeds is undertaken.

Development is also an ongoing process. Merely because one message or set of messages has been developed does not mean that the Development process ceases. The propaganda team merely takes up new developmental tasks. Indeed, the drawing board is always open for further development of new approaches to new audiences or refinement of old, but successful approaches with established audiences.

As we will see and come to understand, no message will be disseminated or deed done unless and until it has been successfully pre-tested.<sup>59</sup> Pre-testing is not an option to be dispensed with “in the interests of time.” It is an absolute. No piece of propaganda will be disseminated until it has been successfully pre-tested.

The last phase of the cycle is Deployment – the part of the cycle in which activities are undertaken and messages actually distributed to the target audience. But it should be understood that while one campaign is being run, there should be others “in the pipeline,” that is, under development. And, as previously stated, the analytical section is constantly seeking viable new target audiences and assessing them rigorously.

If there is a “starting point,” it should be with the reception by the propaganda team of the broad policy guidance from the leadership. We stated in the previous section that propaganda is made to achieve some political purpose.<sup>60</sup> Note that, for insurgents, such guidance comes from the movement’s top leaders. The point is that, without some Central Idea and political vision, there is no point in attempting propaganda. If there is no political idea, it follows that there is nothing to propagate.

Propaganda is merely a methodical process for spreading messages – it is NOT the source of those messages. The political vision or Central Idea must come from the leadership.<sup>61</sup>

*To repeat what has already been said, if there is no grand vision to put before the people, no idea they should come to support, no goal for which the people should be striving – whether revolutionary or counter-revolutionary – the propaganda machinery is totally useless. A regime*

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<sup>59</sup> This is not a “maybe we’ll do it” step – it is an ABSOLUTE step. You will pay a very heavy price if you do not pre-test your materials before you disseminate them. See Annex A. Dr. Munoz reports that some pre-testing is done, but it is spotty and lacks rigor. In some cases, units will use their interpreters as “subjects” for “pre-testing.” It is overlooked that interpreters who have lived for many years in the West may not have the same attitudes as would villagers who have never been outside their home province.

<sup>60</sup> In this sense, propaganda’s object is similar to Clausewitz’s conception of war. That is, its purpose is to serve or achieve some political end – “politics by other means.”

<sup>61</sup> It may be that the word “propaganda” has become tainted for Americans by some earlier master practitioners such as Josef Goebbels, V.I. Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung. The author would argue that “propaganda” merely describes a means or mechanism, not the political content that is propounded by that mechanism. See Annex B (Glossary) for “propaganda” and other related terms.

might have the finest printing capabilities, the most powerful radio stations, and the most gifted speechwriters, but if it lacks a Central Idea to propagate or propound, all this equipment and the skilled staff are irrelevant. If a regime has nothing to say, there is nothing to say.

Let's look at each of the three phases of the Psyop Cycle.

Presuming that policy guidance – the Central Idea or grand vision – is in hand, our first step is obviously to consider what that guidance means in terms of specific results or ends that relate to various groups of people. Any political idea is, almost by definition, going to serve the interests of some groups while undercutting the interests of others. This is as true of insurgent movements as it is of governments-in-being.

The propagandist must thoroughly understand what his leaders are advocating and how their policies will impact on various groups. Indeed, the key task of a true propagandist is to transform policy guidance from its abstract form into concrete, meaningful action in the Real World.

Having understood and clarified, if necessary, the policy guidance from on high, the propagandist then turns to examine his building blocks – his target audiences and his communities – on which he must build his political mobilization campaign. From exhaustive research, the propagandist knows intimately what groups are already well disposed to his views, which are adamantly opposed, and which lie in the “gray area” – neither on board nor opposed. He then looks at the linkages between these groups. Which “favorable” target audiences have strong, lasting ties with what neutral (or even opposition) groups? Which groups, adamantly opposed to the propagandist, have powerful ties to key target audiences of potential operational interest? Are there important neutral audiences which, if won over, might tip the scales in our favor?

You will find “natural allies” in every pack of audiences – individuals and groups who, for reasons of their own – will aid and support you. Remember that this is not because you are charming and witty, but because they have interests to protect. As the propagandist, you are merely a catalyst triggering a reaction. *What matters is their self-interest and how it can be harnessed to pull along the policy chariot.* Your job is therefore to lash up these potentially friendly groups with the political directives from on high and goad these folks to action.

You will also find “natural enemies” in every community – more in some communities, fewer in others – who will work assiduously against you. Bear in mind that these groups also have their perceived interests or values to defend. Hostile target audiences bear careful analysis as do favorable and neutral audiences. As the propagandist, your job is to see whether it is possible to push these groups from the “hostile” into the “neutral” column.<sup>62</sup>

The calculus for the analyst is to discern a pattern of relationships between audiences that would enable the propagandist to influence several groups – perhaps many such groups – by working

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<sup>62</sup> Col. Newsham notes that although it is relatively rare to win over hostile audiences, it is sometimes possible to cause them to separate from other hostile groups and perhaps even cease supporting the enemy. Any result of this kind is a gain for the counterinsurgent as it marks a decline in popular support for the insurgent movement.

hard on one or two key target audiences having powerful linkages to other groups whether friendly, neutral or even hostile.

At the same time, the analyst must comprehend what the opposition is willing to fight for. How deeply are these opposing views or interests held? Is there a way to satisfy – at least in part – the wishes and desires of these opposing groups? Or, at a minimum, is there a way to avoid truly antagonizing opponents without compromising one's own goals?

These are vital considerations for a practitioner who wishes to advance his cause. There is no benefit if all that you accomplish is to amuse your friends while enraging your adversaries. For then, you have gained little or nothing that you did not already have, while provoking new or heightened opposition from your enemies.<sup>63</sup>

With analysis and selection of key audiences well underway, the propagandist now turns once again to his policy guidance. It is now time to set a precise objective for each and every selected target audience. Unlike the usual “support the government, oppose the insurgents” pseudo-appeals by the U.S. Army, the call here is highly specific. Put an informal way, we must ask: “*what do we want the target audience to do for us?*”

An objective is not some gelatinous, ill-defined pabulum. It is highly specific and, as mentioned in an earlier section, requires an active verb to specify the desired action: *vote, boycott, march, provide (xyz), assist, and so on*. U.S. Army and CIA propagandists seldom set well-defined Psyop objectives before plowing ahead with their campaigns. Because they fail to do this, it becomes difficult to relate specific campaigns to policy objectives. Hence, messages often are general in nature, usually vague, and above all, many make no demands upon the target audience to actually DO something.

With a clear objective set for each target audience, it is now possible to proceed to the development of propaganda appropriate for the selected target audience.

The policy guidance shapes the family of “moves” crafted for an audience. This is not to say that the policy itself is stated explicitly in each “move.” Not at all. Rather, it is to say that *each and every “move” in some way supports the policy objective* and advances the target audience along our carefully defined pathway to achievement of the policy goal.<sup>64</sup> If a proposed “propaganda move” has no policy purpose, it is not propaganda.

In the Development Phase there are several vital considerations, cultural and operational, which must be taken into account before even one leaflet is disseminated. First and foremost is an evaluation of the target audience's overall condition. From our analysis, we know who the target

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<sup>63</sup> There are some rare situations in which you do, indeed, wish to deliberately enrage your enemy. If you know that a thoroughly enraged enemy will act like a bull seeing a red flag and do something so stupid as to wreck his rapport with the local people, then by all means wave that flag. The cautionary note is know exactly what you are doing and why – your action must be a carefully considered tactical gambit.

<sup>64</sup> We should bear in mind Mao's advice that, for propaganda to have real effect, it must be relevant to the people: “*Our job is not to recite our political programme to the people, for nobody will listen to such recitations; we must link the political mobilization for the war with developments in the war and with the life of the soldiers and the people...*” On Political Mobilization, 1938



is, where it lives, its language and religion, and the reason that it has been selected from many others as the subject of our campaign.

Now we must apply the Three R's of propaganda operations. These Three R's, which combine cultural with operational factors, are: Reach, Reception, and Response.<sup>65</sup>

Reach is the means by which we may contact the target audience we have selected. This is not so simple as might at first be assumed. Some target audiences are physically under the control of the enemy. Others live in inaccessible areas. Yet others may speak dialects or languages that are not those of the predominant culture. There is also the important consideration of literacy. If an audience has a very low literacy level, printed materials [except illustrations] simply may not "reach" the target audience. Yes, you can distribute the article or leaflet, but if few can read it you have failed to "reach" your audience. There is also the important aspect of using symbols and wording that are culturally appropriate.

Reception depends on Reach. If you cannot first reach your audience, it follows that you have no possibility of your message being "received." The key element in reception of a message is credibility. *If a message lacks credibility, even if it is truthful, well stated, and important, it will be disregarded.*

Like Reach, Reception is also dependent on cultural aspects. In Iraq, U.S. soldiers distributed soccer balls with the green flag of Islam printed on them. Forget the motivational message – it was never "received." What good Muslim would consider kicking an object bearing the sacred symbols and color of his faith? Here it is clear that the well-intended proponents of the soccer ball idea did not think in cultural terms.

Response is the key. This is the Psyop objective that you have set for the target audience. What the propagandist seeks is action. What we want the audience to do must, first of all, be something that is supportive of the policy objective. If the action desired has no relevance to that policy objective, it follows that the audience must never be asked to take that action. Second, what we wish to have happen must be something that the target audience can reasonably do. It is totally unreasonable for a propagandist to demand that an audience "hand over Osama." This is absurd, yet such demands (amazingly) have been made. Rather, the Response we seek should in some way, however subtle, be within the audience's power. Never ask someone to do something he cannot do.

Let's now consider the Three R's in context. We have set our objective – we know what we want the selected target audience to do for us. (We also know that, because of its linkage to other target audiences, our primary target audience will have a "pulling" effect on the actions of several others.) We now consider a variety of ways to Reach the key audience. The ideal approach is through key communicators having influence with the target audience, backed up by

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<sup>65</sup> The U.S. Army uses other terms, notably "receptivity, susceptibility, and effectiveness." The author, though Bragg-trained, believes that the terms "reach, reception, and response" are more precise and describe the operational process more clearly. {See Annex B - Glossary.} A fourth "R" that should be kept in mind is "Repetition" or, if you prefer, "Reinforcement." Once it is clear that you and your target audience have connected, it is then time to repeat your message many times – but in different ways.

a “media mix” that is sustained over time. Here we are limited only by our imaginations and the cultural appropriateness of our activities. A number of such possibilities are recorded in Annexes E and F to stimulate your thinking.

The message that we wish to convey to our target audience can be woven into speeches, skits, radio broadcasts, illustrations, DVDs, and a host of other “media.” However, ALL “moves” must be inter-locking and mutually reinforcing. All messages, using whatever media, must convey the same general idea, again and again and again. Reinforcement by constant repetition is the key to classroom learning. It is also the key to successful advertising, as witness “*You deserve a break today*” and other phrases that have been beaten into our consciousness. Repetition is also the key in propaganda operations.

We now come to the transition between Development and Deployment. The gateway to Deployment lies through pre-testing. As noted, this is an absolute. Bad propaganda is worse than no propaganda at all. If you make a butt-stupid gaffe in your message or media, you have just thrown yourself for a twenty-yard loss with your intended target audience. You will not only fail at Reception, but of greater importance, you will jeopardize your overall relationship with your selected target audience. A good example of this was the airdrop of U.S. leaflets bearing Surahs from the Holy Qur’an. There was a serious flaw in this plan: the sayings of the Qur’an are considered holy by Muslims and therefore should never touch the soil.

Had the idea of air-dropping leaflets bearing Qur’anic excerpts been pre-tested, a Muslim would have very quickly pointed out to us that it was highly inappropriate. But, since the “propagandist” went merrily on his way without pre-testing, a very serious mistake was made. Well, as the saying goes, stupid is as stupid does. Since this foolish operation ignored cultural aspects – which would have come to light had the material been pre-tested – it resulted in a propaganda black eye for our team.

Be advised that a propaganda operation is like a tennis match – it is a competitive sport. If you give your opponent an easy shot, expect that he will smash the ball down your throat. The Taliban obviously would capitalize on American stupidities by saying, in effect, “*Well, that just goes to show you good people that the Americans are infidels, just as we have been telling you all along – they have no respect for the Word of God.*”

We can at least take some comfort that commercial firms also commit costly gaffes. Unlike our own tragic mistakes that result in operational failures, we can laugh at their gaffes which result merely in embarrassment. My favorite is the advertising blitz by the Swedish vacuum cleaner manufacturer, Electrolux. Now, we all know that Electrolux makes an excellent product. That is not the issue. However, the company selected an advertising firm (I presume it was Swedish) that came out with the ringing phrase all over America that proclaimed: “*Nothing sucks like Electrolux!*”

Had the Swedish advertising wonks bothered to pre-test this catchy jingle with any three American housewives, and asked why the women were roaring with laughter, the Swedes might not have gone forward with their costly – and very embarrassing – ad campaign.

You have now been warned. Do not fall into this same trap and commit an embarrassing gaffe because you didn't pre-test. As the Chinese say: *"Wise men learn from others' mistakes, ordinary men from their own, and fools from neither."*

If your messages and the broad framework of your campaign (the Three R's) have passed muster during pre-testing, you may now proceed to Deployment. We will discuss this more fully in a following section. But what matters here is that your intelligence arm is once again active. It should be monitoring the effects that are observed or reported among your target audience. Post-testing of your campaign and its materials is another vital step, because only from gauging effects can you make corrections and adjust your campaign – either to correct mistakes or to reinforce success.

## **15. The Fine Art of Motivation**

Motivation of substantial numbers of people is the key to success in any political campaign – and certainly a political warfare campaign that will decide the outcome of an insurgency. Political mobilization is the heart of an insurgency. The side that is successful in motivating a large enough body of people will be the winner. Either the regime will succeed in preserving itself against the political challenge of its opponents, or the insurgents will gain enough popular support to overthrow the regime.

We have discussed how the building blocks are essential to both sides. We have noted that there must be a Central Idea around which the people can be mobilized. While it is axiomatic that mobilizing support of the people is the unifying factor in insurgency, the decentralization of tactical operations – even propaganda operations – to the lowest level is vital to success. This is so because it is virtually impossible for a regime (or occupying force) sitting at its headquarters in the capital to direct tactical operations in every valley or hamlet as if all were cut exactly the same like cookies.

As we will see, propaganda operations are conducted simultaneously at the strategic (or national) level and at the tactical (or unit) level. These two levels must be mutually supportive, but they also must remain independent of one another. The temptation is for strategic units to seize control of tactical influence operations. This merely stifles local creativity, initiative, and agility while imposing unneeded administrative burdens on the strategic unit. As can be seen in Annexes E and F, the strategic unit's mission is fundamentally different from the missions of the many tactical units. The two must work together, but they must also leave "breathing space" for one another.

Let us state as a principle of insurgency that every military action conducted by each company, platoon, or squad must serve some political purpose, however humble. Indeed, in his famous aphorism about the "guerrilla being a fish" and the people "the water" in which the fish must swim, Mao tells us that the relationship between the people and the military forces of either side will determine who wins the crown of popular support.<sup>66</sup>

And so, to motivation.

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<sup>66</sup> Mao Tse-tung quoted in Stuart Schram, p.287-288

The word “motivation” derives from the Latin words “motus” or “motivus” meaning “of motion” or “to move.” The word therefore indicates dynamism, change, activity, motion. To motivate, then, is to move someone or something to take some action.

The U.S. Army and CIA are still somewhat in the dark about how to motivate various target audiences to act in ways that advance our cause, or conversely, to cease acting in ways that hinder our cause. Understanding motivation should not be a great mystery because American political parties and Fortune 500 companies routinely spend enormous sums to motivate voters or customers to act in certain ways. They clearly understand the “tactics, techniques and procedures” of motivating large audiences.

The Army and Agency could profit by reading the late Dale Carnegie’s once-famous book, How to Win Friends and Influence People. Carnegie hit the nail on the head in his usual direct way. He observed that: “*Every act you ever performed since the day you were born is because you wanted something.*”<sup>67</sup> Think about it.

Also consider the following wisdom Carnegie quotes from Professor Harry A. Overstreet from his book Influencing Human Behavior:

Action springs out of what we fundamentally desire...and the best piece of advice which can be given to would-be persuaders, whether in business, in the home, in politics, is: first, arouse in the other person an eager want. He who can do this has the whole world with him. He who cannot walks a lonely way.<sup>68</sup>

Many parents also have considerable experience in motivating their children. While it is true that not all children are as well behaved or as conforming to our wishes as we might like, it is equally true that the majority of parents often are successful in shaping the behavior of their kids.

How is this done? Motivation is based on the establishment of a credible set of positive and negative incentives. Some incentives are set for us by others. But I believe the most powerful motivants are those that come from within us – those we set for ourselves.

Let’s examine three examples. In the case of young parents with a small child, the parents can shape the behavior (ie. the actions) of the child by playing upon the child’s own wishes. If the child wishes ice cream for dessert, that is the incentive for the child to eat his peas. And if the child misbehaves at school, the teacher can ensure that he sits at his desk while other kids go out to play. These are *externally* set motivants – the parents set these motivants based upon their knowledge of their child’s desires. By the same token, consider a bright young woman from a disadvantaged background who realizes that if she earns a baccalaureate degree at night, she can leave off with her present boring job as a file clerk and obtain a better position as a teacher. Here the desire comes from within. In my view, *internal* motivants are more powerful than incentives from outside sources.

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<sup>67</sup> Dale Carnegie, p. 40

<sup>68</sup> Harry A. Overstreet, quoted in Carnegie, op.cit., p.40

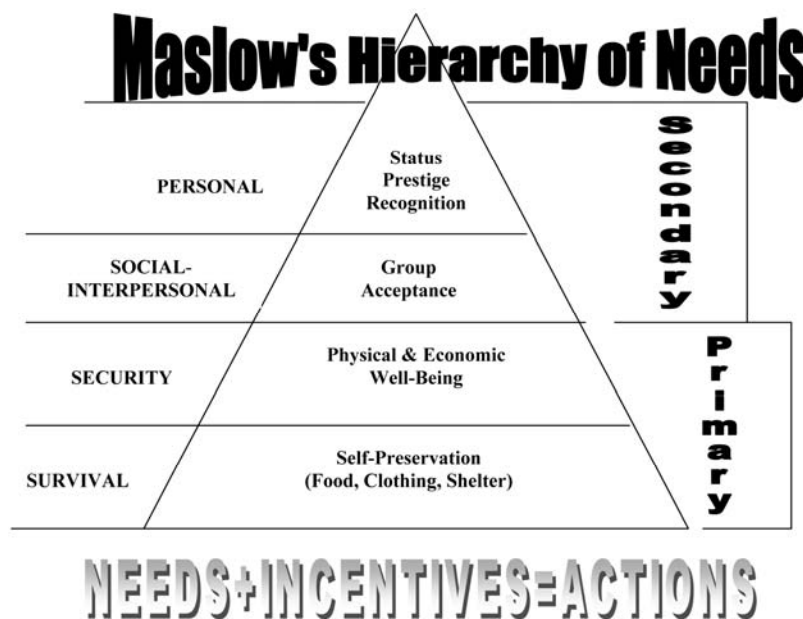
In the case of the ambitious young woman, it may be that the basis for her desire to earn a degree was her observation of friends and family who advanced in their careers through education. Or it might be the realization that the salary is better for teachers than it is for file clerks. Or again, it might be a sense of self-worth, pride and raw determination to escape poverty and a bad home life against great odds. (This is often the case for kids from unfortunate backgrounds.) I know personally of one young woman who was in this exact situation. She told me: *“I could see “up” and I could see “down.” “Up” looked lots better to me.”*<sup>69</sup>

The point is that motivation is based on recognition of possibilities – and certainly consideration of alternative outcomes – and the conscious decision to obtain something perceived as positive or desirable. Once something is perceived as desirable, and once that desirable object is perceived as possible or within reach, it becomes a magnet. It becomes a motivator for all human beings, regardless of whether the individual is 5, 25, 45, or 65.

But what should be equally clear is that what is perceived as desirable and obtainable for a five year-old may (or may not) appeal to the 25 year-old. Needs and aspirations vary. The challenge for the propagandist, then, is to discover what is considered vital or important for each target audience. What is desirable to one audience may not be of the slightest interest to another.

If you know what a person or group needs or desires, and you are in a position to make that wish a reality, you are in a position to motivate.

Abraham Maslow, an eminent psychologist, posited a “hierarchy of needs” that could be used as a basis for analyzing individuals or groups. At the base of this hierarchy are physical needs – food, clothing, and shelter – without which life is impossible. Maslow states that when the basic elements have been satisfied an individual (or group) will look to the next level in the hierarchy.



<sup>69</sup> Author’s personal conversation with a woman from a disadvantaged background who, by working two jobs, ultimately completed both a baccalaureate and a Master’s Degree and became a teacher.

It should be admitted that some scholars challenge Maslow's Hierarchy on various grounds. Since we are practitioners, not academics, we need not enter that scholarly debate. While realizing that Maslow's formulation, like any other thoughtful analysis, is subject to question and interpretation, we might still profitably use his methodology when assessing target audience needs in general terms.

Clearly his great formula, expressed as " $N + I = A$ " is well worth our remembering and putting into practice. *Needs plus Incentives equal Actions*. According to Maslow, if the five year-old child mentioned above perceives a "need" for ice cream, and the parents are in a position to offer ice cream as dessert IF the child eats his peas (the Incentive,) it is likely that the peas will be eaten (the desired Action.) Now, I will caveat this statement by saying "likely" because, as we know, nothing is absolutely certain but death and taxes. But if the perceived need is great enough, and the incentive is clearly obtainable, I would say that a betting man's wager is safe that the specified action will take place.

There is another framework for motivating a target. That model was devised by Jacques Ellul, a French Catholic intellectual who began life as a Marxist. In the author's opinion, Ellul is the pre-eminent thinker on propaganda and its power.

Ellul believes that there is a three-stage process that leads a target to act. In his view, the first step is Explanation. Without thorough and convincing explanation of a problem or condition, an individual or group would form no opinion (or at least no coherent opinion) about the condition or problem it confronts. Thus, the propagandist has, as his first step, the careful understanding of the problem at hand and its careful explanation to the target audience. Echoing Ellul's observation, Vladimir Lenin had this to say about the task of a propagandist or agitator:

The art of any propagandist and agitator consists in his ability to find the best means of influencing any given audience, by presenting a definite truth, in such a way as to make it most convincing, most easy to digest, most graphic, and most strongly impressive.<sup>70</sup>

Only after the propagandist has transmitted a clear and precise Explanation of cause and effect is the second stage of persuasion possible: Justification.

For action to take place, the second step is that a propagandee must be assured that he is completely justified in holding the view he does, and in taking the action that the propagandist directs. This is not to say that the target of a propaganda operation must act morally, but it is to say that he/she must believe that what he/she does is fully justified either by local conditions or the actions of others. It is a kind of psychological assurance that removes or reduces guilt and doubts about the "rightness" of some proposed action.

Once the individual is convinced that action is fully justified, action is sure to follow. That action is directed by the propagandist and can be either positive or negative. For example, the propagandist might call for a certain action that advances The Cause (which could be quite positive, involving self-sacrifice and dedication.) Conversely, a propagandist might urge the propagandee to "get even with enemies" (further identified as Unbelievers, Revanchists,

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<sup>70</sup> Lenin as trans. by Dora Cox in Lenin Collected Works, p. 341.

Enemies of the People, etc.) The point is that Justification is an essential condition before action can be demanded. Put another way, Justification is the rationalization or “reason why” needed for action.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the Action called for is the Psyop Objective set for the target audience based upon the policy guidance received from the leaders. The methodical spread of propaganda to stimulate action must not be confused with the nature of the action called for. *Always remember that the propagandist does not originate policy but merely provides the operational means by which a leadership – regime or rebel – mobilizes support for its Cause.*

### **Explanation → Justification → Action**

Motivation, then, is a complex process stemming from a perception of something needed or desired, but lacking or not yet attained. As in Maslow, it may be based on a hierarchy of needs. As with Ellul, it may be less dependent on needs, but related to justification based on explanation of events or conditions in which the target audience finds itself. The task of the propagandist is to relate policy guidance received from on high to the wants and needs of various target audiences, with the object always of stimulating action by the audience in support of policy. Since all target audiences differ in at least some respects from all others, it follows that no one pathway to motivation exists. Rather, each target audience must be carefully assessed on its own merits and propaganda operations crafted around the characteristics, attitudes and needs specific to that audience.<sup>71</sup>

Ellul makes two points that should be etched on the brain of every practitioner of the art of propaganda operations:

An analysis of propaganda therefore shows that it succeeds primarily because it corresponds exactly to a need of the masses. Let us remember just two aspects of this: the need for explanations and the need for values...<sup>72</sup>

The secret of propaganda success or failure is this: Has it or has it not satisfied the unconscious need of the individual whom it addressed? No propaganda can have an effect unless it is needed, though the need may not be expressed as such but remain unconscious.<sup>73</sup>

## **16. Rapport, Rapport, Rapport**

Real estate sales representatives will tell you that they have three criteria for determining the attractiveness of a piece of property to a buyer. In order of importance, those three factors are: “location, location, and location.”

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<sup>71</sup> For a more complete treatment of Ellul’s views on propaganda, the reader is directed to Annex C of Lamborn, The People in Arms, or better, directly to Ellul’s seminal work: Propaganda: the Formation of Men’s Minds. Ellul’s work should be read cover-to-cover by every Psyop professional.

<sup>72</sup> Ellul, p. 146

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 139

In inter-personal relations, whether it is politics, sales, adult teaching, intelligence gathering, counseling, or a host of similar people-oriented activities, professionals also have three factors. In priority order, they are: “rapport, rapport, rapport.”

A Chinese proverb has it that: “*A man without a smiling face must not open a shop.*”

Insurgency is a people-oriented activity. We might therefore infer that, for a practitioner of insurgency, building rapport with the people who live in a given area is just as vital as it is for a merchant to build and maintain good relations with his customers.

So what is rapport? It is hard to define the term apart from the relationships between people having that strong inter-personal affinity, understanding, and trust that are the hallmarks of good rapport. Perhaps “you will know it when you see it.”

It is true that some people have an innate gift for establishing excellent rapport with others very quickly, while other individuals may labor at this...and others fail completely.

Rapport is a kind of magnetism that draws people together – even people of differing backgrounds, races, levels of education, and socio-economic status. Possibly in extreme cases, we may call this gift “charisma.” Some people are blessed with charisma. These rare individuals can enter a room, or just sit on a curb, and win the confidence and even the affection of the people around them.<sup>74</sup>

Whatever the case, for a practitioner of insurgency, it is vital to establish good rapport with the people in a given district, valley, town, or other locality as rapidly as possible.<sup>75</sup> With good rapport, many things become possible. Doors will open. Faces will brighten. One can almost feel the “positive electrical charges” in the air emanating from excellent rapport. Trust and confidence follow from relationships based on good rapport. “*The love of the people is the king’s protection.*”

I believe that establishing good rapport is the vital first step for anyone in the business of insurgency, whether on the regime or the insurgent side, if he hopes to win and hold the active support of the people. Smiles and handshakes (if culturally appropriate) are more likely to win hearts than would be frowns and shaking fists.

Suppose you are entering a village to meet with someone in authority. You and your men all are brandishing M-16 rifles and pointing them at anyone you see in the street. Your voice conveys a note of hostility, even hints of arrogance and racial overtones. You demand “information” from

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<sup>74</sup> The late Roberto D’Aubuisson of El Salvador was just such an individual. Though a Salvadoran officer, and later a high political leader of the ARENA party, he could (and did) sit on curbs and talk one-on-one with Salvadorans of very humble background. Though hated by some, he was loved by many.

<sup>75</sup> “Force protection” has been used by overly cautious American commanders to avoid any casualties. This merely has the effect of playing into the Taliban’s hands, as “force protection” separates U.S. forces from the people – precisely what the insurgents want. Moreover, our overly cautious practices convince the Afghan people that Americans are “afraid” of the enemy. (Are we?) Insurgencies are won only by those who are not afraid to go among the people every day and mobilize their active support.



the elder or official who comes to greet you. Your demeanor sends signals that you do not like either the village or the elder. You interrupt the elder when he begins to speak with: *“come on, come on, old man – get to the point.”*

You don’t speak Pashto...and he doesn’t speak English. And yet, a valuable opportunity has been irretrievably lost not because of the language barrier, but by your failure to establish rapport. Treat others as you would be treated – with courtesy and respect.<sup>76</sup>

Let us take a look at a municipal election to test just how strong rapport can be. One candidate patiently walks each street in his district, meeting the voters and shaking hands, with a winning smile on his face and a cheery word for everyone he meets – even known supporters of his opponent. The other candidate runs a smear campaign using televised ads, but not taking the time to meet with anyone, remaining aloof from the public, and instead of using cheery words, this candidate uses insults and threats.

So, all other things equal, for whom would you vote?

As we know, in an insurgency – a kind of “jig saw puzzle” war to use Mao’s phrase – some districts will be firmly in the regime’s camp, other districts just as firmly in the insurgents’ pocket, but the majority of districts are up for grabs. This is the vital “swing vote” that will decide the outcome of the armed politics that is insurgency. Hence, the main contest between the opposing camps will be for the support of these presently uncommitted districts.

Any American campaign manager worth his salt knows that no two precincts are exactly the same in all respects. Each has its unique persona. The trick is therefore to determine as precisely as possible in each precinct who the inhabitants are and what their main concerns are. Great effort is made to evaluate the political (and cultural, socio-economic, etc., etc.) make-up of each small unit. Based upon his in-depth research, a campaign manager may decide that certain districts firmly in the opponent’s camp are simply not worth contesting. Why waste money and time that could be put to better use elsewhere? He also knows that districts already firmly committed to his candidate need only some low cost tummy-rubbing to keep them happy. We might call his approach “economy of effort.” There is no need to expend resources where the outcome is not in doubt.

Where the gloves come off, and where the real political warfare begins, is in contesting the uncommitted precincts. Here is where the candidate must spend most of his time, meeting personally with as many voters as possible, listening to their complaints and concerns, holding rallies, and speaking to various groups. This is where the precinct organization must be reinforced with extra willing hands and precious campaign funds.

To win the uncommitted zones, all the political skills in the arsenal are brought into play. Chief among these is the ability of the candidate and his foot soldiers to establish solid rapport among the hundreds, or perhaps thousands of citizens who live in these areas. The issues certainly do matter. But the merits of the issues alone will not win the day. Rather, it will be an ability to

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<sup>76</sup> From his experience in Southeast Asia, Col. Newsham comments: “In some countries you can just sit for a period with somebody—even if you don’t speak a word of each other’s language—and it can mean a lot.”

turn otherwise curious spectators and fence-sitters into actively committed supporters that will ensure victory.

To do this, the practitioner needs a viable campaign strategy. And an essential element of that strategy is the ability to establish rapport. A man without a smiling or genuinely concerned face should not expect to win the active, enthusiastic support – and perhaps the love – of his people. Afghans may be from a very different culture than ours, but like us, they can spot a phony instantly.

If humanity is basically the same around the world, is it not true that courtesy and regard for others applies equally in Kandahar as it does in Kansas?

## **17. The Conductor's Score**

Symphonies are much more than a pile of musical tones thrown together. Dvorak's Symphony "From the New World" is arguably one of the most beautiful – and complex – pieces of music ever composed. To produce its lyrical tones, its vibrant energy and motion, its poetic melodies and harmonies, an orchestra consisting of 80 or more different musicians must be assembled. Each instrumentalist, from the concertmaster (first chair violinist) to the most junior member of the orchestra has his or her part. Some parts will be prominent – indeed melodic; others may perhaps be subtle – the supporting harmonies and rhythms. *But the important point is that all the instruments of the orchestra contribute to the whole.* Without all the parts, great or small, being played with consummate skill and outstanding musicianship, there would be no music at all.

Imagine if all the musicians decided for themselves when they would play, what they would play, or indeed, whether they would play their parts!

What would result from this chaos? Cacophony!

This brings me to my central point. What is required to turn individual parts into a symphony is the baton of a master conductor – and the conductor's ability to direct the effort of the orchestra in a coordinated manner rests upon his conductor's score.

Those of you who have played in an orchestra, whether at school or in your community, know that each instrument has sheet music for its own specific part, but not for all parts. And since each part differs from the parts played by other instruments, the solo violinist may or may not know what the specific notes are for the flute section, tympani, French horns, or the cellos. But because the maestro has his conductor's score, which contains all the parts to be played, he knows what the various sections – strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion – are expected to play and when.

So it is in a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign. There will be many parts, some great and others small, some near at hand and others far away, but all interlocking and mutually supportive, just as is the case in Dvorak's brilliant symphony. Without a central theme well conducted by a maestro of propaganda, all that will be produced will be a confusing babble of noise. There will be conflicting messages and images, a disjointed cacophony pleasing to no one

and annoying to everyone. As we have noted earlier, bad propaganda is worse than no propaganda at all.

The near-spastic release of messages and images that now characterizes our “influence” is the equivalent of musicians playing odd notes at odd times. What is the impact?

In propaganda operations, it is necessary to have a fully integrated campaign plan that literally orchestrates every move and keeps the “music” flowing uninterruptedly to its audience. Propaganda must move to a “conductor’s score” that knows every part intimately. I call a propaganda campaign plan “events moving in time.”

From Day Zero moving forward, ALL major propaganda “moves” pertaining to our selected target audience should be laid out, virtually mapped. They lead to the eventual attainment of our Objective supporting the policy guidance we have received. Print, Electronic, and above all, Direct propaganda moves must be coordinated with each other. More than that, they must be mutually reinforcing.<sup>77</sup> What is proclaimed from the lectern or pulpit on Day One must be followed up with broadcasts and commentaries on Day Two and by leaflets and pamphlets on Day Three to be followed by rallies, meetings, and focus groups on Day Four and so on. The central theme for that target audience must in some way be clearly featured in each and every move. Bernays: *“But whatever is done must be synchronized accurately with all other forms of appeal to the public.”*<sup>78</sup>

As in a great symphony, one hears the same theme or refrain again and again, though perhaps with differing instrumentation, strings at one point, woodwinds at another. Still, what a member of an audience listens for throughout (at least subconsciously) is the central theme. It is the recurring central theme that conveys the composer’s musical idea.

Orchestration is not to say that a maestro is personally responsible for playing each part of the composition. Rather it is given to the conductor to ensure that what is produced by his orchestra will have the impact intended by the composer. Indeed, members of an orchestra are expected to be professionals who have mastered their instruments, not rank amateurs who cannot tell a French horn from a piccolo.

By the same token, master propagandists must equal musicians in their professionalism and “musicianship.” There is no room for poseurs who understand neither the underlying theory of propaganda nor the specifics of practical applications. Where amateurs and poseurs creep in, cacophony (and chaos) in propaganda operations is sure to follow.

As in so much else with the general challenge of insurgency, in propaganda operations it is vital to have central direction, but decentralized execution. It is imperative to have as the “instrumentalists” at province and district level true professionals who know their target

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<sup>77</sup> Again, the author wishes to emphasize that a national-level influence effort does NOT imply micro-management of local efforts at village and valley level. It does require orchestration and close coordination based upon a general guideline or script available at all levels, but maximum flexibility to practitioners at the local, district, and provincial levels.

<sup>78</sup> Bernays, p.103

audiences intimately and understand their craft of persuasion as well as Joshua Bell knows how to play his famous 1713 “Gibson” Stradivarius. Like serious music, serious propaganda is no place for mere streetcorner buskers.

In political warfare there must be a Central Idea or shared vision that unites all parts of a campaign and is, in fact, the lodestone for all propaganda “moves.” Note, I did not say all “messages.” Messages must be tailored to specific audiences. They must be couched in terms familiar to a given audience and carefully connected to the specific interests and needs of that audience. But the Central Idea is overarching. It must be the political program that is put forward as the goal of society as a whole. For without some Central Idea, there can be no direction toward which all citizens are striving.

In a country like Afghanistan, although there are many dozens – perhaps hundreds – of groups (ethnic, socio-economic, religious, ideological, etc.) ultimately there are only two broad political choices before the public. Society can either advance or it can regress. True, debate may focus on what “advancement” means or how it should be pursued. Regression is a bit clearer. It means turning the clock back to “the way things used to be.” Regression makes no demands other than societal paralysis.

Those groups favoring progress of one form or another generally hold that it is essential to achieve three broad objectives: security and social order, economic recovery, and improvement in living conditions. There is no clear agreement on how these goals are to be achieved, by whom, and at what pace. What groups favoring advancement can agree upon, however, is that Regression is not their view of the future.

It is imperative for the practitioner to identify all target audiences that in some way favor progress (admitting the ambiguity of the term) and note where they live, what they believe, who they support or oppose, and many other factors. These are our “natural allies” and the audiences we are most likely to be able to influence.

Propagandists formulate what are called “cohesive” campaigns when the object is to draw together target audiences having similar goals and views.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, it may be possible for a skilled propagandist to build, over time, a broad coalition of like-minded groups.

Propagandists formulate “divisive” campaigns intended for hostile target audiences. These are not the standard denigration efforts so typical of U.S. “propaganda” – such as portraying Osama bin-Laden with devil’s horns – but are more sophisticated campaigns crafted in such a way as to split opposition groups, isolate hardcore elements from more moderate opponents, and sow discontent in enemy ranks. For reasons discussed later, divisive campaigns are more difficult to conduct than are “cohesive” campaigns.

As already discussed, there is also the overriding consideration that a propagandist gains little or nothing by constantly reacting to his adversary’s propaganda campaign – refuting and denying his allegations. This strongly suggests that the enemy has the initiative. You want your opponent in the position of having to react to your campaign, not you to his. Maintain the

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<sup>79</sup> See Annex B (Glossary)

initiative at all times; use “damage limitation” techniques only sparingly. (Counterpropaganda will be covered in Section 20.) *Run your own positive campaigns designed to influence key groups – and let the Taliban react to you, for once.*

In closing this section, it is important for the practitioner to keep in mind that he must place himself in a position to motivate his target audiences through incentives relevant to the needs and desires of his audiences. It is his duty to translate the dictates of policy into action on the ground. Moreover, whenever possible, the propagandist must look to build ever larger coalitions of supporters and well-wishers while at the same time undercutting, dividing, and melting away the adversary’s base of support.

This is a discipline for master thinkers who are master propagandists, not for amateurs.

## **18. Cinderella’s Slipper**

To be effective, to have real power, propaganda – of whatever stripe – must be perfectly suited to the target audience for which it is intended. Like Cinderella’s glass slipper, the message and the means by which it is delivered to the target audience must be precisely matched to the foot of the target audience.

We know that certain target audiences are selected above others based upon their relevance to the political objectives set for us, and their ability to “pull” other audiences due to their linkage with them IF we are successful in moving our main target in the direction we prefer. We have thoroughly analyzed these key target audiences. As we’ve agreed, we will come to know them better than they know themselves. We know who they are, where they are, who their leaders are, what the groups hold to be credible and believable, how they receive information, and what their salient needs are.

In our propaganda “skunk works” we are crafting a series of moves intended to motivate the audience. Those moves involve design of a “media mix” that is culturally appropriate to the target. If that audience consists of illiterate tribesmen, it follows that our print materials will have few words and mainly photos or illustrations. Our electronic effort will stress radio broadcasts that are exciting and informative – and contain news and other useful information beside our “commercial” message. But it is our Direct message that is most likely to have the impact we desire. It is extremely important that speeches, rallies, slogans, Civic Action projects, festivals, and other events be finely tailored to the needs, wishes, and of course, cultural norms of the illiterate tribesmen.

Perhaps there is a town in our A/O. In a town it might be expected that literacy rates are at least marginally higher than is the case in remote tribal areas. Merchants, craftsmen, and petty officials will have some capability to read and write. (We will know this level of literacy from our exhaustive analysis.) With urbanized target audiences, our print materials can feature simple newssheets and pamphlets – all carefully tied to the core needs of the target audience and *reflecting what is of value to him, not to us*. Radio and perhaps some video might be used – again, highly audience-focused. Trade guilds, shuras, schools, and community associations are excellent targets for Direct propaganda. Respected government officials should meet regularly

with these organizations; indeed, if such associations of merchants and other townspeople do not exist, they must be created.

Always bear in mind Ellul's advice: *"The number of possible responses differs from person to person. Obviously, an esthete's reaction to a poster will differ from a worker's. The response really depends on the entire social context of an individual, on his milieu, his education, his family, his profession."*<sup>80</sup>

In developed countries, where there are "mass audiences," it is obvious that televised news and Internet are of vital importance, and great newspapers have secondary value for spreading images and messages. However, with the exception of the capital city, Kabul, and possibly one or two regional centers, there is frankly no such thing as a "mass audience" in Afghanistan. Like Tip O'Neill's politics, all audiences are local.

Now, it should be noted that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban make excellent use of outlets such as Al-Jazeera to get their messages and images out to a world audience. That said, Al-Jazeera is not a major instrument for influencing Afghan domestic audiences. Its reach is into the Arab world and to distant places like Tokyo and London. What is odd is that the Government of Afghanistan has at best a weak international image, if it has any image whatsoever. European, North American, East Asian and other audiences are often recipients of "news" and lurid battle scenes happily supplied by Taliban Psyop officers via Al-Jazeera and other outlets. By contrast, I have yet to see an Afghan government-supplied video about any program that is underway such as primary education, healthcare, Taliban depredations or executions, local government, or even culture and folklore.

The point being made is that the Afghan government, with Allied help, must set up a central political warfare mechanism that will address its messages to many audiences, domestic and overseas, and that its programs must carefully match the idiosyncrasies of many audiences. The problem at the national level is, of course, ensuring that what is projected to a foreign audience does not contradict what is being said or done at the provincial level. The solution, though, is good coordination – not control. The maestro with the baton must be skilled at conducting a masterful propaganda symphony.

Although international propaganda is of great importance, where the glass slipper must fit the toes is at local level.

Great autonomy must be afforded local propagandists – perhaps trained by authorities in the capital, but otherwise left unmolested – to devise culturally appropriate campaigns for selected targets in their respective localities. Since each locality is unique, it follows that no two local campaigns will be identical. But then, they don't need to be. Indeed, they should not be identical. Micro-campaigns tailored to local conditions are far more likely to have relevance to local people than nationwide "one size fits all" campaigns.

Kabul and Bagram officials will howl in protest. How can propaganda be coordinated if autonomy is given to provincial or even district propagandists? Well, that is what the Taliban is

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<sup>80</sup> Ellul, p. 299

able to do. One therefore wonders what the problem is at the Bagram or Kabul level, other than the ever-present desire for centralized control.

To be successful, the propaganda disseminated must be agile, tailored to special audiences and local conditions, quick to react to local developments, and above all continuous. If that sounds to you like a job for a forward deployed unit, you are correct.

Because of its obsession with central control and its impossibly cumbersome “approval” processes, Bagram invariably throws heaps of sand into the tactical propaganda gearbox. By the time each and every tactical “move” is approved by some staff officer, the “psychological moment” has long passed, the Taliban has seized that moment, and the Coalition (as usual) stands looking like a deer in the headlights – dumb and incapable. We are paralyzed by our own (muddle-headed) procedures.

To be effective, each and every local unit – American or Afghan – must be capable of influencing its own relatively small area. This cannot be left to the bureaucracy in Kabul. Kabul has its own target set – and those targets are the vital overseas target audiences in places like Tokyo, Beijing, Moscow, Berlin, and Paris. Let Kabul focus its attention on those.

So this brings us to fitting Cinderella’s slipper comfortably on the foot where it belongs – the valley or village or hamlet where the war will be won or lost.

All forward-deployed units must have a language-qualified officer with at least entry-level Psyop training and two or three very smart enlisted members. This officer must stay abreast of the Area Intelligence being developed by the Company’s mini-S-2 shop and of course, at higher levels. This political warfare officer must develop the micro-campaign for his area and, with the active participation of the commander – and indeed, each man in the company – carry out the forward influence operation.

Bagram’s role is to *set clear, but fairly broad, guidelines as to the general type of influence operations it expects at company level – and then get out of the way*. Guidance will build on a Central Idea or war aim (if ever there should be one) of the government. Perhaps the greatest difference between the political warfare campaigns of the insurgents and the regime or occupying power is the demonstrated flexibility and timeliness of the former and the tardiness and ineptitude of the latter. This is because local insurgents usually are given much more latitude to run local-level operations. And...they have a Central Idea.

Like shoes, in propaganda operations “one size does not fit all.” The shoe must fit the foot, not the foot the shoe. As long as the Coalition plays the “one size” game, and attempts to run all operations centrally, it can expect ALL of its influence campaigns to be as exciting as stale beer – and about as timely as the Mendenhall Glacier.

## 19. Measuring Inputs or Outcomes?<sup>81</sup>

The Deployment phase of our cycle is the stage where things start to happen. Speeches are made, pamphlets and brochures distributed, skits and plays given, “influence” music played, slogans repeated, and so on. It is our symphony.

As with a symphony, a propaganda campaign has solo parts and duets, trios, and at times the entire orchestra playing triple *fortissimo* and *vivace*. It may have a *crescendo* or a *glissando*. But whether fast or slow, loud or quiet, your campaign, like the symphony, goes on continuously. It is relentless, unending, and above all, each passage in some way reinforces or builds upon what has gone before it.

As stated in previous sections, *many* activities are going on simultaneously if your campaign is to have success. The maestro has the master score, but he does not try to play both the tuba and the clarinet. He wisely leaves that to the professional musicians.

Now the campaign is in full swing. But what is it that we have achieved?

Americans as a people are obsessed by statistics – metrics. Whether a stock price or a baseball team’s record of wins and losses, Americans want to know: “how fast, how many, how much, or how good.” This is the world of comparative results.

And that is not necessarily a bad thing (although Americans routinely try to measure things that cannot be measured or quantified.)

So the question arises, how do you measure propaganda?

Many skeptics would laugh at the idea as “impossible.” Others will tear their hair out in an attempt to come up with hard and fast yardsticks. Budgeteers will inquire how they can justify the line items on their books.

Sam Sarkesian had this to say about metrics: “*Body counts, real estate, and prisoners taken are not true indicators of success or progress. Political and psychological factors are more important indicators, but they cannot be measured by conventional means.*”<sup>82</sup>

The sad thing is that military forces tend to “measure” propaganda by inputs, not by outcomes. The “IO” briefing for the CG will state the *number* of leader engagements held in a given period, the *number* of leaflets dropped or distributed, the *number* of broadcasts made, and the *number* of speeches given. Hmm. Looks to me suspiciously as though we are measuring inputs here. Not outputs, or effects, or outcomes.

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<sup>81</sup> Author is indebted to friend and associate Dave Kilcullen for this title. The original title for the section was to have been: Measuring Effects: Inputs or Outputs? Kilcullen hit the nail on the head when he told a large Defense Department audience that we should be measuring “outcomes.”

<sup>82</sup> Sarkesian, para. 17, lines 2-4. As we will see, there are many unconventional ways to gauge the impact of a propaganda campaign.



What does measuring inputs really tell us?

As stated back in Section 2, what we are really concerned about is *influence*, motivation, getting certain people to do certain things for us. In this sense, the inputs – the speeches, leaflets, leader engagements, etc. – are all *investments*. They are our “capital.” The ROI – the Return on Investment – for propaganda of any kind is “*what did they DO for us?*” That is what we must measure if we are to have a valid “metric” so beloved by the American system.

We know that we have set an Objective for each and every audience that we choose as a target for our propaganda. That Objective must be supportive of the Policy guidance we have received and within the power of the selected target audience to do. Remember that we always are demanding some action of our target audience. “What is it we want them to do for us?”

Now, to “measure” a target audience’s actions, we must turn once again to the fellows at the hub of the wheel: Intelligence. For it will be our intelligence collectors, given proper collection tasking, who can tell us what happened. And based upon their reporting, we are now in a position to make adjustments to our campaign as needed.<sup>83</sup>

The collection tasking we give to the S-2 shop will be questions that fall into one of two categories – Indirect Indicators or Direct Indicators.

As their names suggest, Direct Indicators are actions – often visible and obvious – taken by the target audience. For example, if we asked the target audience to “boycott, vote, buy, surrender, attack, build, or evacuate,” did they in fact do as we directed? That is called “responsive action.” It responds to the directive given. In a military world, a command is given and the response is expected to be immediate – and visible. As you might infer, this is the most reliable indicator that your campaign has succeeded or not.

Other Direct Indicators include reports from members of the target audience itself. The intelligence people through their debriefing of individuals from the audience (tribesmen, captured guerrillas, merchants, whomever) will learn whether or not the audience did what it was told to do. Or if it did not, why it did not. In some cases, you may have launched a series of “moves” that was designed to corrode enemy morale. A reliable source can tell S-2 what the current state of morale is in his unit.

And finally, the intelligence officer may have sources who are not members of the target audience, but they are reliable reporters and they have access to the audience. These are “observer commentaries” on the effects of your campaign. Observers sometimes will in fact be more objective than the participants themselves. The point remains that S-2 should be alert to gauge responsive action by debriefing as many participants and observers as possible in order to give us a clear picture of the results of our ongoing campaign.

Indirect Indicators require some careful analysis.

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<sup>83</sup> This is not to underestimate the value of surveys or well-sourced press reports. USAID has developed a survey called the Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF), which has considerable potential for obtaining the kinds of feedback information needed by the political warfare staff.

There often are cases in an insurgency where we do not have any physical access to the target audience we hope to influence. They may be under enemy control, in a remote location, or across a border. The results of your campaign may be a bit harder to gauge, but “harder” does not mean “impossible.” To use the Seabees’ famous phrase: “it just takes a little longer.”

If your campaign is having some success, and the enemy has control of your audience, it may be possible to discern the enemy’s use of counterpropaganda techniques or physical moves that relate to your campaign. A physical move may be the strengthening of local defenses in a certain area, the relocation of a hamlet’s population, arrests and the like. If he uses counterpropaganda techniques, give yourself a pat on the back. For once, you now have him attempting to “counter” your moves. We will discuss counterpropaganda in the next section.

Finally, there may be events that are logically related in some way to your desired action on the part of the target audience. Let us say that you urged your target, the laborers, to slow down their pace of work on some enemy earthwork or facility. Perhaps we do not know if the pace of work has slowed, but we observe that the enemy is bringing in extra laborers. That may tell us what we want to know. If you asked workmen to waste certain critical materials in a factory, has the enemy been forced to increase his purchases of those raw materials? If you have called for a “sick out,” has there been a corresponding fall in production? And if you have requested that peasants hide a portion of their crop so it will not be taken by the guerrilla forces, do we note enemy “logistics” cadres attempting to locate alternative food supplies for their colleagues in the mountains? These are all Indirect indicators – they may, *or they may not*, be related to your campaign. But an intelligence professional will report these effects and their timing, and the analysts can then make their judgments.

Ellul notes that propaganda’s effects are not always obvious:

There can be profound propaganda effects that do not manifest themselves outwardly by changes of public opinion on one subject or another.<sup>84</sup>

Even if your campaign is *responsible only in part* for a work slowdown, or a cut-off of the food supply, that is “return” enough on your propaganda investment. It doesn’t much matter from the practitioner’s standpoint that weather conditions also impacted the grain supply for the enemy alongside your persuasive campaign directed at the peasants. What matters is the cumulative result that pressure has been increased on the enemy.

To try splitting hairs by saying that propaganda was 52% responsible and the weather only 48% responsible for the guerrillas’ food shortage is a Pentagon illness known as “hyper-metrica.” It’s a very serious, highly contagious condition that affects many.

Now the point of carefully monitoring and post-testing actual effects of propaganda is to refine your ongoing campaign.

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<sup>84</sup> Ellul, p. 269

If all along the cycle you have done your homework – careful selection of viable targets, thorough and excruciating analysis of those targets, setting of a policy-relevant yet feasible Objective, careful development of persuasive “moves,” pre-testing, and truly masterful orchestration of your campaign, the result should be successful. Your Objective should be achieved; the target audience should do what you asked them to do.

But let us suppose that Intelligence comes to us and reports that the target audience did not do what we asked them to do. We naturally need to sit down and figure out why not.

Did we cut corners in spotting our target audiences or in assessing them? Did we set an impossible Objective for the audience? Were our messages murky and contradictory? Did we skip pre-testing? Or, perhaps our campaign was conducted in a disjointed and clumsy manner. We must be harshly honest in assessing our failure, because it is only by spotting our mistakes that we can hope to improve our campaigns in the future.

But even if our campaign is a roaring success, we cannot idly pat ourselves on the back and compliment each other for being so witty and clever. Rather, while reinforcing what is successful, we must also carefully assess “how things have changed.”

In any political warfare battle, things WILL change. By definition, if we have succeeded in our campaign and attained our Objective, the situation of the target audience and indeed the overall situation of the war itself has changed at least to some degree. Neither the audience nor the war situation will be exactly as it was *status quo ante*.

We must understand how the situation has changed. What are the new conditions? What is the condition of our target audience today? What are its new concerns? How did the enemy react?

These – and many more questions – must be asked if we are to make valid adjustments to the course setting of our ongoing campaign. Perhaps like the skipper of a sailing ship, if he notices a shift in wind direction or velocity, he will steer the vessel to port or starboard as he deems appropriate. But despite the adjustment, the ship sails onward.

So do we.

## **20. The Game of Minds**

Early in this work we made the point that, as a matter of course, we drive the propaganda train – and our enemies should be left to catch it if they can. Merely “countering” does not win political wars. Mounting effective positive campaigns wins them.

Even so, there is a role for Counterpropaganda. But the point must be stressed that Counterpropaganda is a very specialized weapon of the propaganda trade. It has two purposes. Mainly it is a “damage control” mechanism. However, in those rare instances when our opponent lies or has made an egregious mistake, we can make clever use of selected Counterpropaganda techniques to damage or even destroy our enemy’s credibility – hence, his effectiveness as a propagandist.

Bear in mind that Counterpropaganda is not a substitute for running positive campaigns. You should use these techniques only when it is absolutely necessary to defend yourself (especially your credibility) or to capitalize on unique opportunities handed to us on a silver tray by our enemy.

Counterpropaganda is built upon solid analysis of your adversary's propaganda campaigns – something that presently is done only sporadically and then, haphazardly.

Ideally we should be taking the pulse of the enemy's propaganda output and its effects on a daily basis. His messages do indeed matter to us. It is not only what he is saying about us that matters – we already have an idea that nearly everything said will be negative. *What matters is what is said, to whom, when, how, and with what effects.* That is a rough paraphrase of Prof. Lasswell's formulation.<sup>85</sup> Lasswell originated a systematic means for analyzing propaganda and, by extension, the campaigns that each “move” is designed to support. He outlined the process as follows:

### **SOURCE – MEDIA – CONTENT – AUDIENCE – EFFECTS**

We might be tempted to blow off “source” and say, of course, it is the Taliban. But is it? Remember that the situation in Afghanistan is very complex. There are a number of players on the field, not just the Taliban. And even if the Taliban is the true source of the “move,” it is entirely possible that their propagandists may use some cover entity or front to float their propaganda line with a particular target audience. Note that Hekmatyar, and even certain of Afghanistan's neighbors, conduct influence campaigns in Afghanistan. Thus, we are dealing with a multiplicity of possible sources!

Why would the Taliban use a “cut-out” (for example) to reach a certain target audience? Perhaps the answer is that, for some reason, it needs to hide its hand lest that audience automatically shut out the substantive message that the Taliban hopes the audience will “Receive.” *Or, perhaps the source is not an Afghan entity at all!* It is important for an analyst to establish without a shadow of doubt who is the true source of the move. For only then can we understand from which direction the campaign is coming – and what may be the intended policy Objective of the source.

Media bears some attention. What media was selected? Why? Was a media mix used? (The analyst must cross check the files to see if two or more different media were used in a particular “move.”) Was the media appropriate both to the message and target audience selected? How well did the source exploit the potential of this particular media? What exceptional skill—or ineptitude—did he demonstrate? Perhaps the opposing propagandist lacks certain capabilities, or the security situation dictates use of certain media and the impossibility of using others. The point is, the analyst must think carefully about the media that has been used.

Content is obvious. What was being said, how well, and with what degree of factual basis? Here again, was the particular message appropriate for a particular target audience – or was it off

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<sup>85</sup> “Who says what to whom with what effect” was originated by Prof. Harold Lasswell, a political scientist and propagandist. Lasswell is quoted in Lyman Bryson, p. 37.

the mark? Did the propagandist explain the problem and provide justifications to the audience for some action? Indeed, what was the recommended Action? Was the source's command of the language, the facts, the cultural nuances, and the persuasive techniques professional or amateurish? What grievances, beliefs, needs, prejudices, or aspirations were mentioned?

The central facet of analysis is, of course, the audience. Why would this particular audience have been chosen as the target? What does the opposing propagandist hope to achieve through this audience (as opposed to some other audience)? Is this an audience that is already sympathetic to the enemy, is it a target believed friendly to us, or is it a neutral audience for which we both are competing? From the media and the content, what can we say about the adversary's knowledge of this target audience? Does he know more about it than we do, or are we still more knowledgeable of the audience than he is?

Finally, effects. The point of all true propaganda is effects. What was the audience's reaction to the "move" or series of moves? Did the audience do what the enemy asked? Or did they ignore the persuasive messages? If they acted, what did they do and why did they do it? If they ignored our enemy's offers and threats, why did they do this?

Obviously, a seasoned analyst who follows enemy (or third party) propaganda on a daily basis will ask many more – and many more sophisticated – questions than these initial ones. But these few questions will give you a flavor of what needs to be examined.

We now return to Counterpropaganda.

It is the effects of the enemy's propaganda that must concern us. All the other aspects are of great analytical interest to us, but it is the effects that matter operationally.

If our enemy has succeeded in achieving his Objective – that is, the audience responded to his message and did as he directed – we may have a situation on our hands requiring prompt "damage control."

Now, if the target audience ignored the enemy, or indeed did the exact opposite of what he demanded, there is no need to "counter" what is obviously an enemy failure. He has made a mistake somewhere either in his analysis or his operations. As Napoleon said, "*Never interrupt your enemy while he is making a mistake.*"

And in the very rare event that the enemy has left himself wide open to a swift rapier thrust by our Counterpropaganda, we should skewer him without pity. *En brochette.*

Where it is vital to counter our enemy is on those (hopefully rare) situations when he has thrown his harpoon effectively and hit a target audience that is being contested. Indeed, if the target audience is vital for both of us – and its support will affect the outcome of the war – we have no choice but to duel with our opponent. We must capture that key audience's support and allegiance.

Propagandists usually consider employing one of eight Counterpropaganda techniques in the arsenal. Three of these eight techniques can be used offensively to damage or destroy an enemy. These are: Direct and Indirect Refutation and Imitative Deception. The other five are defensive in nature: Forestalling (also known as Conditioning,) Minimizing, Diversionary Effort, Silence, and Restrictive Measures. Remember, these eight are used only rarely, not every day. The use of defensive Counterpropaganda is, in fact, one of the Indirect Indicators that will tell our enemy that he has scored a success against us. Put another way, we want to see our *enemy* attempting to use Counterpropaganda against *us*. That tells us we are succeeding.

Let's look at the defensive measures first.

Forestalling techniques are used when there is Bad News coming down, and we are the cause of that Bad News. The idea is to "*get there fustest with the mostest*"<sup>86</sup> in terms of factual information and explanation of the Bad News. Even "justification," if such is warranted. For example, we have just dumped a 500 lb. bomb on a home. The wrong home, as it turns out. Do you want the Taliban to be spreading the word about this very latest American "atrocities?" Or is it better to get your own message out first?

You have no choice but to own up to the Bad Deed. You have no option but to admit that this mistake was your fault. But if you are *first* to give your version of the event, it takes the wind out of the sails of the enemy. Instead of gloating about your gaffe, and making you look even more culpable than you are, he can only "follow" with a message that will have far less impact than your immediate open admission. Above all, you have preserved your credibility and your image of concern and responsibility.

Minimizing is similar to forestalling, but has the slight twist that you are de-emphasizing some fact (usually unpleasant for our side) that is being trumpeted by the enemy. He hopes to take a five-dollar issue and make it a twenty-dollar issue. You want to take the five-dollar issue and shrink it, if possible, to pennies. Consider a land dispute involving U.S. forces, for example. The enemy will want to blow this dispute out of all proportion. Imperialism! Money-bag-diplomacy! (Etc.) To be sure, the dispute exists. That is hard fact. We cannot wish that away or pretend that it does not exist. But what we can do is state persuasively – backed by independently verifiable evidence – that the dispute is now in process of resolution, by legitimate traditional means.

A Diversionary Effort is just that. We do the "look over there" thing and steer attention to some other event or condition that shifts the focus of the target audience. Anyone who reads the daily newspapers knows how quickly one "Holy Cow!" story will drown out some earlier story.

Silence can sometimes be used effectively if the enemy's charges are so wide of the mark that even the most dull-witted member of the intended target audience is aware of the fact. Silence actually says: "*that is such a ridiculous and baseless claim that it does not merit even an acknowledgement, much less a reply.*" The enemy's story will quickly die as new stories and themes appear – most of which, hopefully, are floated by you.

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<sup>86</sup> Phrase attributed to Confederate cavalry commander Nathan Bedford Forrest who described the secret of his many tactical successes.

Last, and absolutely least, is undertaking what are called Restrictive Measures. These are the old stand-bys of jamming broadcasts, punishing people for possession of “subversive literature,” setting up wire fences around hamlets, and so on. These techniques, all well known to the old Stalinists, are not usually effective. If you try to prevent someone from listening or reading, you may experience a “boomerang” effect. That is, the person who has been prevented from “Receiving” may seek out the material clandestinely.<sup>87</sup>

Now, let’s take a look at the offensive measures.

Direct and Indirect Refutation are techniques known to any high school or college debate team. The difference between the two is that in Direct Refutation you rebut the enemy’s argument, point-by-point, fact-by-fact. In Indirect Refutation you expand the argument slightly. *“Why didn’t (name of opponent) mention the following facts? Is there some reason he is hiding these from you? Interesting that he just focused on these few points which we have just proved to you are all false.”*

Here you have a chance to go for the enemy’s jugular – his credibility. Destroy that and you have just severed his vital link to his intended target audience. Whenever the enemy can be caught in an obvious lie, or be proved flat wrong, you must not bungle the golden opportunity to blow him out of the water with his own target audiences.

When dealing with villagers who may have been influenced by the enemy, you should never start an argument, or worse, accuse someone of lying. Instead, when an individual makes a specious or totally preposterous statement, ask that individual how he came to know this information. This will put him on the defensive—maybe even tease out the fact that “the mullah told me.” Only then do you present your factual information, but in such a way that the individual can independently verify as much as possible of what you say.

By far, Imitative Deception is the most clever of the Counterpropaganda techniques (and my special favorite!) However, and it is an important “however,” Imitative Deception requires immense amounts of technical skill, plenty of imagination, and a helluva keen sense of humor. Note that Albert Einstein once said: *“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”*<sup>88</sup>

This is how it works. The enemy has just floated a leaflet or poster or some other message – even a speech. Sensing an opportunity, the White Hats (that’s us) take the original...and then tinker with it a little. We change a word or we add something or take something away or diddle with the meaning a little. Point is, the “replica” looks a lot like the original. But it is NOT the original. It only looks that way. Then the intended target audience is saturated with this ersatz material of ours.

The audience may have both versions, and they do look similar. But they are confused as to the message or the action required. They may think that our adversary is feeding them a line of

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<sup>87</sup> Some book publishers call this the “Banned in Boston Effect.” That is, if a book is banned in Boston, it must have “juicy” scenes; hence, the public will rush out to buy the book from any source.

<sup>88</sup> Albert Einstein quoted in Isaacson, p. 7.

baloney. Whatever the audience's reaction may be: *it is certainly not what the opposition intended.*

The opposing propagandist is now in a quandary. He can attempt to refute the imitative material, but who is to say what the "imitative material" is? The original and the replica are circulating side by side. They look alike, so if you disown one, you disown both – and that means disowning your own product. Most embarrassing.

In the case of Afghanistan, the Taliban regularly circulates CDs of "action" against the Coalition forces. Usually there is "songlike" accompaniment intended to engage the target and reinforce the visual effects. These appear to be mastered in Europe and then sent back to "Taliwood" in Pakistan for distribution in the marketplaces at cost.

It has long occurred to me that these CDs could easily be copied, altered slightly and in a culturally appropriate way, re-mastered, and then sold at even lower cost than the genuine product. Why not flood the propaganda CD market with "knock-offs" of our own? I doubt that the Taliban will take us to U.S. District Court for copyright infringement.

In sum, a competent propaganda outfit always should be analyzing the enemy's "moves" and assessing the effectiveness of his campaigns. That is a 24/7 job for some of your brainiest and most talented analysts.

Counterpropaganda techniques, however, are like surgeons tools. "*First, do no harm.*" Only if the situation absolutely requires using a defensive technique do you use it. Otherwise, it is best to leave the surgeon's saw and forceps on the operating table. But if the enemy gives you a golden opportunity to destroy him, do not wait for an engraved invitation to take action.

## **21. The Voice of the Infantry**

Getting your word out to the enemy is vital. And this can be done through a variety of media. A Psyop campaign, for example, nearly always uses a "media mix." And that mix depends heavily on how a given target audience receives its information. A "mix" includes varying combinations of Print, Electronic, and Direct media to reach selected target audiences, whether friendly, neutral, or enemy.

The spoken word has been of decisive importance in affairs down through the centuries. And at the local level, "*who says what to whom with what effects*" can be decisive.

Even the meanest, nastiest, most adamant guerrillas are nonetheless human beings. Like the rest of us, guerrillas are influenced by words and their actions often are shaped by them. Many if not most low-level guerrilla fighters are barely literate; some are superstitious; all can be motivated to some extent – if we can "reach" them. Perhaps the most effective weapon in our tactical propaganda arsenal is the loudspeaker. Loudspeakers are merely a technical means that we can use to "speak" to our enemies in the field. Or annoy them, if we wish.



Request a small but powerful tactical loudspeaker. It can be carried by a soldier up a hill, or mounted on a jeep or tripod. Some of our best loudspeakers can be heard—wind conditions and terrain factors permitting—for five miles or more. Obtain a loudspeaker and become familiar with it.<sup>89</sup>

Loudspeakers can be deployed rapidly and used in a variety of ways. Police often use loudspeakers to address armed criminals barricaded in buildings. It stands to reason that you could also use a loudspeaker to address a guerrilla you have cornered in a building or perhaps have surrounded on a hilltop. Better to make a reasoned appeal to surrender—which might be accepted—than to sacrifice soldiers' lives in an armed assault when that can be avoided.

When you are aware of a guerrilla concentration in a particular area, but you do not wish (or may not be able) to send troops in to clean them out, you can waft a message in their direction. Appeals should be as clear and concise as possible. If directing surrender, the message should tell the target exactly HOW and WHERE he should do this. *“Come out in a single file with your hands empty and above your heads, palms facing us, with your rifle slung downward over your left shoulder.”* Or more broadly, *“Be at the clearing at XYZ tomorrow at exactly 1000.”* The actual message takes its shape from the situation.

But loudspeakers have wider applications. Sometimes they can be used very cleverly.

You can use loudspeakers to broadcast news in a local area. The civilians appreciate this. And it is especially fun to send off “news from home and family” to named insurgents as this definitely causes the less militant guerrillas to wonder if hiding out in the woods is really such a smart thing to do. If Habibzai's wife just had a baby, well, break the happy news to him! (Do not smirk when doing this.) You might even shame him by providing extra food and comfort items to the wife and new baby if his family happens to live in your A/O. What you are trying to do is increase the psychological pressure on Habibzai to the breaking point. Bad (or good) news from hearth and home is one way to do this.

One other thing you can do to heighten tensions in the enemy camp is to put pressure on the true hardcore guerrilla leaders – especially if they have a reputation for brutality and evil deeds – by addressing them by name. This is especially true if you have some real “dirt” on them. If through your interviews and interrogations you have derived intimate details about a certain insurgent chieftain, USE that information. If you can discredit or embarrass him, or sow doubts about him in the minds of his followers—wonderful!!!

This is an example of a “divisive” campaign at the tactical level. The challenge in this, obviously, is obtaining sufficient accurate, independently verifiable “dirt” on your top enemy leaders. Once again, Intelligence has to be in a position to provide this material.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Under NO circumstances should you allow anyone to stand directly in front of a loudspeaker unless they are at least 100 yards away. Some loudspeakers at near range are capable of blowing out eardrums.

<sup>90</sup> Col. Newsham recalled a successful use of tactical loudspeakers in the 1980s against the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army, which played on suspicions and exacerbated existing factionalism. The CPP/NPA basically turned upon itself.

As an example: Akbar Khan, local guerrilla chieftain, has been seen in town. Yes, we know this because (cite exact date and time) he was seen by three of his neighbors (may be notional) who reported him coming out of his neighbor's wife's home (name inserted here.) "We hope Akbar Khan's future visits are equally pleasant" or words to that effect.

Another example: Ahmad Shah, local insurgent cadre, is known to be padding the books and keeping the difference for himself. "By the way, guys, when was the last time the books were audited? And what IS Ahmad Shah doing with all that extra money?"

Another example: "We understand that your food rations have been cut again to (fill in the blank with the exact daily rations.) It must be getting awfully tough out there. Oh, by the way, here in town we just had a festival and the cooking was fantastic! These were the delicacies served...."

I think you get the idea.

Anything that sows distrust, destroys insurgent morale, creates animosity in his ranks, or plays (without smirking) on his privations and difficulties is grist for the mill. This is not easy to do, and does require a LOT of creativity and analytical support. That said, if you are in a position to run "divisive" campaigns that break up enemy groups, do so.

You will need language-qualified persons to use either the microphones, or better, to record tapes for playback over the speakers. DO NOT attempt to use U.S. personnel for this enterprise unless they happen to be native speakers fluent in the local dialect.

One final thought about loudspeakers. You can snooker the hell out of gullible people if you use your equipment imaginatively. During a field training exercise thirty years ago at Fort Hood, we used loudspeakers to simulate tank noises, clanking of messkits, voices, etc., with the intention of fooling the G-2 section of the Second Armored Division. The 2AD people fell for the ruse hook, line, and sinker, and redeployed two battalions where they were totally useless when we of the triumphant 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division attacked. Why? *The 2AD people thought we were where we weren't.* (I still laugh about this highly successful ruse. As Lincoln said, "You can fool some of the people all the time!")

You can place your loudspeaker in such a way as to broadcast a variety of "noises" to pockets of guerrillas. Voices of ghosts, eerie unearthly sounds and shrieks, phantasms, sounds of US soldiers on the march, anything. Anything that will unnerve or worry or disorient your enemy is fair game. Why not keep them awake all night?<sup>91</sup>

Then, in the morning, when you whack them—they'll all be fast asleep. Just a thought.

It has been said that the mortar is the "artillery of the infantry." Well, *the tactical loudspeaker is the voice of the infantry.* Oddly, and perhaps tellingly, in my tours in Afghanistan, I saw NOT ONE tactical loudspeaker in use by any unit that I visited.

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<sup>91</sup> I am reliably informed that in 1989 U.S. Psyop units played loud rock 'n roll music over loudspeakers to force Juan Noriega, then-dictator of Panama, into surrendering without a firefight.

Why have we forgotten this most versatile – and powerful – of weapon systems?

## 22. How Sick is the Patient?

Let's turn our attention for a moment to an assessment of what types of campaigns and approaches might be appropriate to districts under partial or full insurgent control.

The question has been asked how one measures the “severity” of an insurgency. I think this is like measuring the “severity” of cancer in an ailing patient. As is known, some cancers kill a patient within weeks. In other cases, a cancer patient may live for years and then die in an auto accident. The easy way out for doctors asked about cancers, or students of irregular warfare asked about insurgencies, is: “It depends.”

Perhaps the first factor in assessing the “severity” of a cancer progressing to Stage Four (or an insurgency moving in the same direction) is an assessment of the general health of the patient. If a patient is otherwise in generally good health, quits smoking, starts eating healthy foods, and has a strong desire to “fight” the cancer – perhaps the prognosis is fair to good. Cancer patients do survive. Conversely, if a patient is in generally poor health, a heavy smoker with weight problems, and has a morose outlook on life – what might be a benign cancer in some other patient could well be lethal for this patient.

So it is, I think, with insurgencies. If a targeted government resolves to reform itself and meet the insurgency head-on with attractive programs of service to the people and improved security, the “cancer” of insurgency could be checked – or eventually beaten.

But if, in its folly, the government chooses to ignore its cancer and resolves instead to “eat, drink, and be merry,” it is likely that the Undertaker for Dead Regimes will be called to give proper burial. The cancer will eventually triumph.

All joking aside, the chief responsibility for success or failure in an insurgency rests not with the insurgents, but with the regime (the government-in-being.) *The insurgents will win only if the regime in power fails in its duty to govern effectively.* Put another way, in virtually all case studies of successful insurgencies, the insurgents won by default. The targeted regime, reduced basically to a hollow shell, collapsed or simply dissolved.

Let's look at some of the factors that may contribute to “Stage Four insurgency.” In a given district or province, which side, the government or the insurgents, have:

- The greater number of active supporters;
- A permanent presence and the ability to effectively administer justice;
- The ability to collect taxes or draw upon local human or material resources;
- The freedom to enter or leave the area at will;
- The ability to collect accurate, valuable intelligence on the opposing side;
- A stronger claim to legitimacy?

While this listing is far from exhaustive, it should be possible for commanders and their intelligence staffs to use these six factors to make at least a thumbnail assessment of the “severity” of an insurgency in a particular locality. Remember that no two localities will be exactly alike. Each district must be assessed on its own merits. Moreover, all local assessments will change from month to month depending on actions taken by the regime and the insurgents. Since insurgency is a competitive sport, be aware that each side will score points depending on the skill they display on the playing field. As points are scored, the district may find itself under greater or lesser control by the opposing sides.

It may be that, at a certain point in time and at a certain place, the insurgents have a greater number of supporters, a permanent presence, the ability to administer justice, the ability to collect “taxes,” the freedom to come and go as they please, abundant good intelligence on regime and allied forces and personnel, and a strong claim to legitimacy. If the regime has few supporters, no permanent presence, no ability to administer justice or collect taxes, little or no intelligence on insurgent operations, and no ability to come or go, that sounds pretty much like Stage Four cancer to me. Pretty severe.

Beware of using the “level of insurgent attacks” as a metric of control! Merely tallying the number of insurgent attacks in a given district could be highly misleading as to the degree of control exercised by the regime or the insurgents. Indeed, a low number of attacks may indicate that the guerrilla forces have already consolidated control of a given area, and not that the area in question is “secure” for the government. By contrast, a high level of attacks may suggest that the guerrillas are desperate either to gain or retain a certain scrap of land. As Sarkesian observed, “body counts” also are highly unreliable as “metrics.”<sup>92</sup> A better measure of success is that advanced by General McChrystal: governance.

Propaganda might be formulated along the general lines suggested by the following chart, recognizing that what matters is the perception of the target audience about its condition. Generally speaking, the more serious the perception of danger is to a target audience, the greater is the audience’s need for activism in our propaganda campaign. Villagers living in a secure, productive environment need messages that “affirm” that they have been on the right path—a “cohesive” campaign. However, those living under enemy rule or threat need messages that call for resistance—a divisive campaign aimed at splitting them away from the insurgents.

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<sup>92</sup> Despite some valid criticisms by Washington experts such as Dr. Anthony Cordesman, field experts such as Dave Kilcullen and Sarah Chayes correctly point out that it is a “blend” of metrics – not one single type of measurement – that over time will indicate a trend. Remember that in an insurgency, a very messy and complicated kind of war, there are no silver yardsticks to “measure success.”

## PERCEIVED DEPRIVATION AND PROPAGANDA MOTIVATION

AUDIENCE PERCEPTION	AUDIENCE NEED	AUDIENCE REACTION	PROPAGANDA'S FUNCTION
Harmony, contentment	Stasis	Satisfaction	Affirms
Mild uncertainty, loss of harmony	Reassurance	Questioning, doubt, pessimism	Reassures
Serious uncertainty, discontent	Answers, explanations	Hard questioning, resentment, complaints	Explains, fixes blame
Latent threat to lifestyle, culture	Protection	Fear, anger, activism	Organizes, mobilizes
Active threat, crisis	Defense	Fear, rage, possible violent action	Leads, directs, points the way

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In closing, practitioners of counterinsurgency would be well advised to do as a physician would do: *assess the Whole Patient before making a diagnosis*. Look at the government side, the insurgent side, and especially, popular attitudes in your A/O very carefully to see if Stage Four cancer exists. What is significant is not the number of rocket or mortar attacks, or even the number of IEDs.<sup>93</sup> Rather, it is the degree to which each side commands the active support of the local people and can administer the area in question.

### 23. Making a Silk Purse from a Sow's Ear

A serious mental block for Western military leaders – especially American military leaders steeped in conventional force-on-force operations – is to see military units as, well, just that – purely military. And, it must be conceded that in a conventional battle, it is probably true that only the unit's firepower really matters.

Yet this mental box prevents conventional minds from seeing more imaginative uses of truly strategic value for tactical military units. In insurgencies, military units must be used in a new way. In fact, firepower is of secondary or even tertiary importance compared with the units' other potential valuable uses. Let us not forget that a regime's military units may well be the government's only tangible presence in a rural area. As we have stated repeatedly, insurgencies are decided by which side is able to gain and hold the active support of the people. *The question then becomes which side the local people will choose when they are eventually forced to make*

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<sup>93</sup> Though the author notes that where the local populace reports the location of IEDs before they can be detonated (essentially proof of accurate, valuable intelligence,) this would qualify as a metric.

*that decision.* Indeed, some Afghans must make that decision daily—or at least whenever the Taliban show up ready to kill “traitors” and their families.

The insurgents will attempt to gain active collaborators in a local area, then work through their agents-in-place to develop a broad base of support in the community. Where they can, the movement will use persuasion based on solid understanding of the people’s needs and grievances. But where they must, insurgents also will use veiled threats of dire consequences to shape the behavior of certain audiences. (*These threats are sometimes carried out as a means of punishing or eliminating opponents while setting an example for others that what the insurgents promise, they deliver.*) Promises and threats are conveyed to the people usually by members of the covert insurgent infrastructure either through word of mouth or through simple print materials such as “night letters.”<sup>94</sup>

Normally, regime and Allied forces are ill-prepared to meet the insurgent challenge head on in valleys and villages – they are too busy being military units – and not busy enough working to mobilize the people politically. This is just as true of Afghan forces as it is of our own conventional units.

The Afghan National Army is the latest attempt at creating a “national” or “Afghan” identity from the patchwork cloth of ethnic groups, languages, and subcultures found in Afghanistan.<sup>95</sup> The ANA, it must be admitted, is something of a mixed bag or, more optimistically, a “work in progress.” Some ANA officers and enlisted soldiers have proven themselves very capable. Others, unfortunately, are frankly little more than a rabble. Whether these units are fully capable or merely an armed embarrassment, the hard fact remains that at this stage the ANA is by no means trained or indoctrinated for defeating an insurgency.

While fostering and promoting effective local government is our top priority, perhaps the next greatest step toward tipping the balance of public opinion to the Kabul regime would be to recast the National Army as a kind of “revolutionary army” that *not only defends its fellow citizens but, when not patrolling the hills, it is laboring alongside the villagers it protects.* By an ANA unit’s strenuous actions on behalf of local people, the unit would make itself part of the community. Over time its presence would come to be viewed as an important asset by the local people. It is possible that the unit could earn the high regard – even love – of the community it serves.

But is creation of such a “revolutionary army” possible?

The conventional boys even now are throwing up their hands and saying: “It can’t be done. Impossible.” Well, let’s look at another time and another place to see if there are lessons we can apply to the present. We must look for a rabble in arms, dressed in rags, many soldiers – most of

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<sup>94</sup> This pattern of using threats is by no means unique to Afghanistan. Author has witnessed the same tactic in Vietnam, El Salvador, Colombia and the Philippines. This is a classic “carrot and stick” approach.

<sup>95</sup> Creation of a “national” army has been tried at least four times with checkered success. It was first attempted by the Iron-Fisted Amir, Abdur Rahman Khan, in the 1880s; again by his grandson, King Amanullah in the 1920s; a third time by President Mohammed Daoud in the 1970s; and the fourth time by the Communist regime in the 1980s. Our fingers are crossed for the success of this latest attempt.

them illiterate – without shoes and even without weapons. We must take stock of the lack of discipline and high desertion rate. Where possible, this armed embarrassment lived in hovels. When possible, it ate whatever it could find. And yet, in this undisciplined, ignorant rabble Baron von Steuben saw the making of a national army – an army of liberation, an army of the people.

Von Steuben's miracle was to transform a motley collection of farm boys and tradesmen volunteers into the first units of the Continental Army. It is well known that he used a model company that he trained personally as the means to train other units. It is less well known that the Declaration of Independence was read to every man in the ranks. Many of the officers (most of whom were educated) studied the document along with writings of Enlightenment thinkers. Make no mistake: this was not a "guns for hire" conventional army, but *an army motivated by the vision of national independence and establishment of responsible self-government*. This aspect of our military origins is generally ignored.

There is one other point to make. If our goal is to create a multi-ethnic "national" army, it must be created around such basics as teaching literacy, hygiene, teamwork, morality and self-discipline. If model companies can be trained to a high standard, and then used (as did von Steuben) to train others, over time a National Army can be created. But it also must be inspired. It must have a purpose – a purpose higher than merely shooting occasionally at guerrillas. That is hardly a reason to exist.

The National Army must be taught that it exists to serve and protect the people. It must have a Code of Conduct that makes clear to every soldier that the Army is a servant of the people of Afghanistan and of each locality where it is deployed. It must bring to the local villages its labor and its capabilities. Seasoned officers and NCOs must assist local defense units and train them to become the first line of defense against the guerrillas.<sup>96</sup> Above all, the National Army must view itself, and come to be viewed by all the people, as the embodiment of Afghanistan's desire to be independent and self-governing. At this time, no indoctrination of officers or soldiers is being done.

Now, let's review the bidding. The Taliban – or Hekmatyar's people – rely on threats and promises to win the people to their side. By contrast, the ANA soldiers *prove their value daily through good deeds and positive contact with their fellow citizens who think highly of the government's revolutionary soldiers who have come to help them*.

Which side do you think will eventually gain and hold the support of the people?

And what does it take to make a military unit truly "revolutionary?" In point of fact, the difference between an ordinary (conventional) military unit and one of the revolutionary type is simply the nature of its relationship to the people. Ordinary soldiers focus on narrow military duties and, at best, refrain from molesting or harming the people.

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<sup>96</sup> Village defense forces under control of local constituted authority (tribal jirga or Community Council) and properly supervised and trained by ANA cadres, are indispensable as auxiliaries to hamper insurgent movements and to free the National Army for patrolling and civic action duties.

By contrast, a revolutionary army is truly an army “of and for the people.” Such an army involves itself extensively in all manner of community activities that materially aid the local people it has come to serve.<sup>97</sup> Revolutionary armies are guided by a Code of Conduct and individual soldiers are expected to live up to that code. That Code places the people at the center of the revolutionary army’s universe. The Code becomes for revolutionary soldiers a matter of pride. *The local people know that such a force is “their” unit – it helps them – and they come to understand that they must help protect such a beneficial unit from harm.*

### نهه نقطې د توجه لپاره

- 1 همیشه په ادب سره خبرې کوي، او د نورو سره احترامانه سلوک کوي.
- 2 خلک مه وهي او مه يې تهديد وي او مه قسم ورباندې کوي.
- 3 هر شې چې اخلي مناسبې پيسې ورکوي.
- 4 هر شې چې په قرض اخلي نو سمه لاسه يې واپس کوي.
- 5 هر شې چې تخريب يا وړان کړې تاوان يې ورکوي.
- 6 فصلونه مه خرابوي او مالونه (غوا-اوداسي نورحيوانات) مه زخميان کوي.
- 7 هميشه دمسلمانو او ماشومانو حفاظت کوي.
- 8 بنديانوسره بد سلوک مکوې.
- 9 هميشه خلکو خدمتگار اوسې.

#### CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Always speak politely and treat others with respect
2. Do not hit people, threaten them or swear at them
3. Pay fairly for everything you buy
4. Return promptly everything you borrow
5. Pay for anything you damage or destroy
6. Do not damage crops or injure livestock
7. At all times protect women and children
8. Do not ill-treat captives
9. Be helpful to the people at all times

The Greek historian Thucydides observed that: “*We secure our friends not by accepting favors, but by doing them.*” It follows that Afghan soldiers who come to bring help and positive assistance to struggling local people will find that their deeds speak louder than could any promises made by the insurgents. The National Army will secure its friends not merely through its words, but more importantly, through its deeds.

<sup>97</sup> The Afghan National Police, an element of the Ministry of Interior rather than the Ministry of Defense, should equally take upon itself a Code of Conduct that places the people as its centerpiece. The ANP, long neglected, is poorly trained and disciplined and is reviled by the people as corrupt and violent. As this is written, the ANP is unfortunately exactly the wrong kind of “government presence” in rural areas.



American military units must unavoidably rotate homeward at the end of a tour of duty, to be replaced by similar units. The great problem that this causes is obviously lack of continuity. The departing unit takes with it all its hard-won area knowledge, the wages of twelve months of sweat and effort. Moreover, there is a break in ties with Elders and other key figures in its Area of Operations. The arriving unit must re-learn all the lessons of culture, geography, microeconomics, local politics, etc., that the former unit took months to learn. The newbies also must re-establish ties with key figures.<sup>98</sup>

But while Americans come and go, the Afghan Army is there to stay. It is permanently based in a given area. This gives the ANA unit far greater opportunity to positively influence the locality in which it is based. American units can and should maintain their own ties with the community, but it is imperative that ANA units become valued, integral parts of the community as soon as possible. If the local people come to trust the government's soldiers, and the local people perceive benefit from the unit's presence, the matter of allegiance and active support will follow. The ANA can do this if it becomes a truly revolutionary army, an army *"of the people, by the people, and for the people."*

While transforming sow's ears into silk purses does not happen every day, I think it may be possible in this special situation. After all, although the heroic Baron von Steuben is long gone, the Age of Miracles has not yet passed.

## **24. So What Can I Do?**

That is a fair question. You might ask why I have put you through 23 excruciating sections. Well, I would consider myself unworthy to be called a propagandist if I did not explain my purpose and ask of you some action as we close our small book.

The Taliban think by their propaganda to damn us as "Crusaders." Well, far from ducking that term as an epithet, I for one feel proud to consider myself a "crusader."

We are not like the helmeted men of a thousand years ago who did battle with swords and axes against the soldiers of the valiant and courteous Salah-ad-din [Saladin] for control over a city holy to three faiths. But we are crusaders in a new way. This war in which we find ourselves is a war not just of the body, but of the mind and of the spirit. It is a war for the minds and souls of half a world. If we are indeed to be crusaders, then let it be known that we are fighting for a world in which human dignity, civilized order, peace, compassion and humble respect prevail. Those are our war aims.

All of us must shoulder our small part of this great burden, for each of us has some vital service to perform. God willing, we will all do our duty.

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<sup>98</sup> The only way to shorten the learning curve is for each deployed U.S. company to be required to write a comprehensive and detailed "continuity study" about the tribes, villages, headmen, and other realities of its A/O. The incoming unit then will have the area knowledge it requires in order to operate more effectively. That "continuity study" is to be preserved by the incoming unit and, in fact, expanded with new information. Moreover, the departing commanding officer should personally introduce his replacement to Elders, clerics, teachers, merchants, and other valued contacts, perhaps privately if that is advisable, or perhaps at a formal banquet if that is culturally appropriate.

Those of us in the business of shaping influence operations can do our part by thinking always in terms of our audiences. In a very real sense, *we are working for them*. They are the people who must make the sacrifices and who will ultimately decide the outcome of this protracted and unhappy struggle.

There are several things you must do.

Your propaganda must command immediate attention. That is, it must break through a veil of skepticism and indifference. It must grab the attention of the audience by the nose so that all competing propagandas fade into oblivion. Propaganda must be heard before it can have any impact. Jacques Ellul: *“We know that propaganda’s first requisite is to be heard, to excite individuals and make them look or listen.”*<sup>99</sup>

Your propaganda must be credible. Propaganda cannot be based on lies and demonstrable falsehoods. Our words must be easy for our friends, our enemies, and especially the fence-sitters to verify or substantiate by what it already knows or believes, by what it experiences, or by other trustworthy information or sources readily at hand. Remember that our deeds speak louder than our words. What we say should bear witness to what we do. Herodotus, the “father of history,” noted that: *“Men trust their eyes more than their ears.”* Our deeds must in all times and in all places give testimony to our war aims. We will do what we say we will do.

Your propaganda must be compelling. Propaganda must be relevant to the audience’s real needs and concerns, and must be both sensible and sensitive. A message has force only if it is something that helps solve problems or provides answers. As Jacques Ellul observed: *“For propaganda to succeed, it must correspond to a need for propaganda on the individual’s part. One can lead a horse to water but cannot make him drink; one cannot reach through propaganda those who do not need what it offers.”*<sup>100</sup> When the target audience perceives something of value in our words or deeds – something real and tangible that not only can be wished for, but attained – it will strive for those goals.

Your propaganda must always be consistent. It must be part of a family of messages and deeds all pointing in some way toward the same Objective. The propagandist must seek many ways to reach his target, but each and every propaganda move must reinforce what has come before it and pave the way for what follows. It cannot be overemphasized that repetition is key.

Keep in mind a few other things as you develop your influence campaigns. Remember that your message must be clearly understood. If it is confusing to some, it probably will be baffling to many. Bear in mind Napoleon’s use of a corporal at his tent to proofread his orders to his field marshals. If the corporal could not understand the message, the Emperor immediately simplified the message. It follows that all effective propaganda is *short, simple, and to the point*.

It is essential to communicate clearly. Be precise. Be persistent. Be patient. Forty years ago I learned the U.S. Army’s method for training new soldiers: *“Tell them what you are going to tell*

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<sup>99</sup> Ellul, op.cit., p.282

<sup>100</sup> Ellul, op.cit., p121

*them. Tell them. Tell them again. Then tell them what you told them.*” I liked that explanation. Repeating your clear concise message helps it be remembered. And ultimately accepted.

Always consider the context in which your message is delivered. Be especially on guard when you attempt to use humor; it can misfire if it is not “in context.” Consider, for example, a joke about a drunk told to a happily inebriated crowd at the officer’s or NCO club. Now, consider telling the exact same joke at the funeral of a man who had died of alcoholism. *I beg of you to be sensitive to your audience.* Remember that humor does not translate well across cultures, but is usually culturally specific.

Cut through the fog. Frame your message using concrete, ordinary words. Never use jargon, even if the Undersecretary of Defense for Jargon personally coined the new pet buzzword. Military people often end up confusing others – even themselves – by using stilted “governmentese” and phrases like “kinetic,” “collateral damage,” and “battle rhythm” when simple words would suffice. Jargon in any language has no place in communication.

Make your message valuable to others. Put information in your propaganda stream that people can actually use! Explain how to solve daily problems. Tell how to make better use of water, food, and other resources. Find out what the audience confronts on a daily basis and seek to position yourself so that you can supply answers or worthy advice. If your messages are perceived to have real value to your audience, you do not need to “sell” your ideas; *your audience will buy them.* Eagerly.

Know yourself. Be aware of your own biases. We all have our prejudices, cognitive traps, flaws and shortcomings. To communicate effectively, try to “step outside of yourself” and see yourself as the other fellow sees you. Henry Ford had this to say: *“If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from his angle as well as your own.”*<sup>101</sup> If you put yourself in the other fellow’s shoes, you might be able to catch a glimpse of yourself as others see you.

Above all, know your audience. Empathy is the ability to understand another person’s situation, feelings, thoughts, hopes, attitudes, and motives. I once served as a personal counselor in a federal organization. If you hope to be of help to a counselee, you need to *understand the circumstances in which that person must live and work.* Many times we unconsciously make assumptions for and about others based solely on our own values and experience – and leap to criticize or prescribe on that basis. As the wise men of the Ojibway noted: *“May I not criticize my neighbor until I have walked a mile in his moccasins.”*

Let me close this work by quoting the guidance offered at the frontispiece. General McChrystal bids us to do the following: *“Learn and adapt to the environment. Keep your skills sharp. Improve daily. Learn how to shape the environment, and how to achieve greater effects with the people more quickly. Listen to and learn from our Afghan colleagues. Communicate and share ideas. Challenge the conventional wisdom if it no longer fits the environment. This is a battle of wits – learn and adapt more quickly than the insurgent.”*<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Henry Ford, quoted in Carnegie, op.cit., p. 45

<sup>102</sup> ISAF Counterinsurgency Guidance: Key Points [formulated by GEN McChrystal.]

I cannot think of more appropriate words as you go out to do the work you were given to do. Remember that you and I are crusaders in a struggle for a new and better world.

## **Closing Thoughts for Part Two**

The basis for all successful political warfare efforts is a compelling vision that speaks to the people's real needs and points the entire nation toward attainment of specific goals. Without such a vision – the policy guidance of the regime – propagandists have nothing to say. In the current struggle in Afghanistan, the government of Hamid Karzai has yet to formulate a clear and credible war aim that propagandists can promote.

Wars are not won by “countering” an enemy. This is as true of conventional operations as it is of insurgencies. It is especially true in political warfare. The enemy should be compelled to counter us (if he can) while we run positive campaigns that promote the Central Idea or vision of the regime. Our strategic goal is to mobilize the people. We do this by methodically building coalitions of target audiences having similar or compatible interests, and rallying as many of the people as possible to the ideals for which we fight. We also do this, wherever possible, by running true “divisive” campaigns aimed at breaking up enemy units and groups, dividing his leaders, isolating him from the people, and dissolving his political base of support.

Propaganda is developed relative to a policy Objective and directed at carefully selected target audiences who can help “our side” attain the Objective. No message or action will be disseminated to any target audience unless it is supportive of a defined Objective and has been thoroughly pre-tested. Pre-testing is NOT optional.

Motivation is the fine art of getting someone (hopefully willingly) to do something that aids our cause. Theories of motivation vary, but each target audience has a powerful lever that a propagandist can use to motivate: *its interests*. It follows that only by very careful and thorough study of each target audience can we discern how best to motivate a particular audience. No two audiences – or their interests – will be exactly the same.

All propaganda operations must be orchestrated so that target audiences are continually subjected to persuasive messages, justifications, and calls for action. Campaigns aimed at overseas or national audiences are to be conducted from the capital while tactical campaigns aimed at local audiences are to be equally well orchestrated, but run by professionals with only general policy guidance from the Center. While all propaganda operations are to be coordinated, maximum flexibility is to be given to provincial and district level propagandists to enable them to shape their operations to local conditions.

To be effective, propaganda must be perfectly suited to the needs of the target audience for which it was intended. The message and the means by which it is delivered must be perfectly tailored to that audience. Cultural factors always are taken into account.

Propaganda's effects can indeed be measured, but not by tallying “inputs.” Rather, the intelligence service must be brought into the effort to discern through Direct and Indirect

Indicators what the impact is of a particular influence campaign. The basic question is whether the audience responded in a manner directed by the propagandist or not. It is not enough to self-congratulate over a success. Rather, as the situation has changed, so the influence campaign must be adjusted continually. And if the effort failed, a dispassionate study must be made to learn the factors bringing about the failure. Errors in analysis, formulation, or any other aspect are to be corrected immediately.

Counterpropaganda is used sparingly and only when it is absolutely necessary to control damage or to seize a golden opportunity to destroy one's opponent. Counterpropaganda is NOT a substitute for running positive campaigns. The basis for use of the eight techniques is analysis of enemy propaganda campaigns that shows that the adversary has succeeded in inflicting some injury on our credibility or in persuading a target audience of the validity of its position.

Next only to establishing competent and effective local governments where such do not presently exist, re-casting the National Army as an army that exists—and is widely perceived to exist—to protect and serve the people is perhaps the greatest step toward gaining the support of the Afghan people. This can be done by changing the attitude of the Afghan Army so that it thoroughly identifies with the people in its A/O. The Afghan National Army must become an army “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” and labor alongside the local inhabitants on a daily basis. It must have a binding Code of Conduct that governs its discipline and its relationship with the people. When the people identify their interests with those of the National Army, and local defense forces are organized—coached by the National Army—the insurgents will have no influence over the people.

**End of Part Two**

## **Annex A: Precepts for Discussion and Debate**

- A man will fight harder for his interests than his rights.
- The time to win a fight is before it starts.
- The mind of the enemy and the will of his leaders is a target of far more importance than the bodies of his troops.
- If the people are for you, you cannot lose. If the people are against you, you cannot win.
- What the heart rejects, the head will not accept.
- Strong, functioning local governments are the solid blocks upon which strong, capable national governments are built.
- Nature abhors a vacuum, we are told, but insurgents love them.
- In an insurgency, if we hope to influence an area, city, or portion of a valley, we first must know who lives there.
- You must know your target audience better than it knows itself.
- The leaders who lend their authority to any propaganda campaign will do so only if it can be made to touch their own interests.
- A message that could mean anything to anyone means nothing to no one.
- Every act you ever performed since the day you were born is because you wanted something
- Merely “countering” the enemy does not win wars.
- Imagination is more important than knowledge.

**Larry's Laws**  
**{of effective Influence Operations}**

1. You must know the target audience better than it knows itself.
2. Never ask a target audience to do something that it simply cannot do.
3. Never issue any persuasive message that cannot be verified independently, at least in part, by the target audience.
4. No newly originated persuasive message will be disseminated until it has been successfully pre-tested.
5. Always fully orchestrate every aspect, every “move,” of your propaganda campaign. All moves should be mutually reinforcing and will support a national Cause – the defined political object of the war.
6. All “moves” will focus on motivating a key target audience to accomplish a specified, desired outcome that can be measured against a stated Objective.
7. Always look at your own propaganda campaign from the enemy’s viewpoint. Always assess the strengths and weaknesses of your own campaign.

**Cola Cultural Conundrum<sup>103</sup>**

An American salesman for a major cola company returned from his assignment in the Middle East and reported that his sales campaign there was a total failure.

“Tell me what happened,” said his boss.

“When I accepted the assignment,” replied the salesman, “I was confident I could turn a profit for the company there, since it was a brand new market, we have a great product, and no one had ever tried our drink. But once I arrived, I realized that I had a problem – I didn’t speak the language. I couldn’t make sales pitches.”

“So what did you do?” asked the boss.

“I decided to convey our message by using three illustrations on a big poster. In the first illustration on the left, I showed a man crawling through the desert heat, exhausted and panting with thirst. The middle sketch showed the same man having a drink of our cola. And the final scene on the right showed the man happy and refreshed. I had the posters plastered at every street corner and in every marketplace.”

“Great idea. That should have worked,” said the boss. “Why didn’t it?”

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<sup>103</sup> Author is indebted to Mr. Bruce G. Bennett, Department of Defense, for this humorous vignette.

“Well,” the salesman confessed, “not only did I not speak the language, but I also didn’t realize that most people in that country read from right to left.”

## **Annex B: Glossary of Terms Relating to Political Warfare and Propaganda**

Active Measures: Soviet term (*aktivniye meropriyatiya*) used to describe covert or deception operations conducted in support of Soviet political or foreign policy objectives.

Agitation: Activity led or fostered by propagandists [agitators] among larger groups of less-educated people to stir up discontent against existing regimes or create a base of support. {see V.I. Lenin}

Attitude: Feeling or position – positive or negative – toward a person, thing, or idea.

Behavior: Visible actions of a person, group, or society, in given circumstances; responses made to one’s environment; outward adjustments made to conditions or changes in one’s world.

Cadre: An insurgent or revolutionary leader who is responsible for recruiting, organizing, and directing elements of the insurgent infrastructure.

Civic Action (CIVAC): Programs of local assistance, undertaken jointly by military (*or insurgent*) forces and local citizens aimed at providing basic administrative services, medical and public health, educational and economic help until it can be sustained by civilian governmental authority. [By its nature, CIVAC is a form of Direct Propaganda and so should be considered in overall PSYOP campaign planning.]

Campaign (PSYOP): An orchestrated propaganda effort having a specific campaign objective that focuses upon a selected key target audience and employs well-developed themes and a media mix to convey persuasive messages to motivate that audience.

Cognition: The act or process of knowing; perception; the ability to gain knowledge or to think. From the Latin *cogito* = “I think.”

Cohesion: Sense of community among the members of a group; willingness of an individual to abide by group norms in order to remain a member of the group.

Consolidation PSYOP: PSYOP directed at population in areas under one’s control—whether liberated or occupied—designed to achieve desired behavior that supports one’s own military and political objectives. These are generally “cohesive” campaigns, as they strive to build support among local audiences.

Counterpropaganda: Ideas and methods used to discredit or negate another’s propaganda or, if possible, to destroy the enemy’s credibility.

Covert Action: The implementation of foreign policy through intelligence means. [Propaganda, Political Action, and Paramilitary operations—hopefully skillfully combined]



Credibility: Worthy of belief or confidence; accepted as trustworthy and reliable.

Deception: Art of misleading through ruse or strategem.

Disaffection: Condition or state of being alienated, resentful, and discontented with existing authority due to a general perception of unfavorable social, economic, or political conditions.

Disinformation: Soviet practice (*dezinformatsiya*) of deliberately creating and spreading false information to mislead a target audience or embarrass an adversary; systematic use of falsehoods to persuade.

Emotion: An affective state of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate, etc., is experienced, as distinguished from cognitive and volitional states of consciousness. Emotions may be accompanied by physiological changes, such as increased heartbeat, crying, trembling, laughing, etc.

From the Latin *emotio* = “a moving away.”

Grievance: A cause of distress or suffering felt by an individual or group sufficient to prompt complaints, disaffection or general resistance.

Ideology: A systematized body of doctrine or beliefs of a social movement, political party, group or class, usually regarding political or economic problems, that offers explanations for why certain problems or conditions exist, and that prescribes certain actions which, if taken, will result in attaining the resolution of those problems and the realization of the “ideal human condition.”

Incentive: Something that incites or motivates to action, usually something sought after as the fulfillment of a recognized need. [N + I = A] Incentives, like needs, may be material or non-material.

Intelligentsia: Intellectuals who form a social, literary, or political vanguard or elite whose support is vital to the success of an insurgent movement or survival of a government.

Issue (see Need): An identified condition of fundamental and long-term importance to a target audience that it cannot ignore, cannot change, and cannot escape; those key needs which, when presented with an Incentive, will motivate the audience to Action, if given sufficient Justification. {see Jacques Ellul}

Justification: The perception that an action is valid, morally right, deserved, or correct based on established procedures, cogent argument, or the merits of the case. {see Jacques Ellul}

Key Communicator: A person whose opinions and information are held credible and who exerts leadership with members of a target audience through legitimate, reward, expert, referent, or coercive power.

Media: Means of communication (three families of media: Print, Electronic, Direct).

Motivation: The art or quality of stimulating action, usually by means of an Incentive and Justification.

Move: In propaganda work, a “move” is a specific act or activity, a part of a broader campaign that could be made by any media. A “move” can be analyzed on its own merits for its effectiveness, technical quality, etc., but should always be understood as being merely one part—or “move”—in a greater game.

Myth: A belief or story, often deeply rooted in a group’s culture, that attempts to explain things seen or unseen, usually in allegorical or parable form; some myths may attempt to make evaluative judgments of people or things, or justify certain consequences as resulting from certain actions.

Need (see Issue): A lack of something wanted or deemed necessary; privation; necessity arising from circumstance or perception.

Perception: The act or faculty of understanding by means of the senses or the mind; recognition; discernment. [See Cognition.]

Political mobilization: The recruitment, organization and motivation of citizens toward the political ends of a government or insurgent movement; the vital political component of insurgency or counterinsurgency.

Political warfare: Aggressive use of political means and propaganda to build one’s base of support while weakening or destroying that of an enemy.

Post-testing: Act of evaluating the effects of a PSYOP campaign after it has taken place.

Pre-testing: Act of testing with a sample audience the likely impact of propaganda materials before their deployment. [This MUST be done, without fail.]

Propaganda: Information or ideas methodically spread to promote a cause; a message or thesis intended to propound or advocate.

Black – origin is deliberately attributed to a false source  
Gray – origin is left ambiguous, but not deliberately falsified  
White – origin is acknowledged by true source

Propaganda Analysis: Analysis of the content, intended audience, and likely impact of propaganda.  
[Source – Media – Content – Audience – Effects]

Propaganda Operations: The planned and methodical dissemination of persuasive ideas, information, or appeals designed to motivate selected target audiences to take certain actions.

Propaganda is conveyed by Print, Electronic and Direct means in the context of a carefully planned psychological operations campaign.

Psyche: Greek goddess of the mind. Figuratively, the human soul, spirit or mind; the mental state or psychological structure of a person, especially as a motive force.

Psychology: The science of understanding and analyzing mental processes and behaviors.

Psychological Operations: Planned efforts to influence selected target audiences to act in ways that assist in the accomplishment of an assigned mission, whether strategic or tactical. An operational art employing psychology to achieve military and political objectives.

Reach: Means of gaining access to or contacting a target audience.  
(Media, or “Receptivity” per FM 33-5)

Reception: Extent to which the audience is likely to accept the information or arguments put before it; credibility and clarity of message content.  
(Message, or “Susceptibility” per FM 33-5)

Response: Ability of the audience to act or respond in a way that helps achieve the propagandist’s objective. A response may or may not be overt or visible to an observer.  
(Motivation, or “Effectiveness” per FM 33-5)

Symbol: Emblem, token, or sign representing something of importance or value that conveys broader meaning to a given target audience, group, or nation.

Target Audience: A well-defined group that shares common characteristics, attitudes and needs. [The basic building block of successful psychological operations campaigns.]

Theme: A well-defined subject of discourse or discussion, element common to a series of messages; central proposition or argument. Propagandist’s crystallization of issues relevant to a target audience that explains to them why certain conditions exist and what can—indeed must—be done. Campaigns usually are organized around a central theme leading to a desired objective.

Values: Ideals, customs, core beliefs and social conventions in a given individual or society used to judge events, ideas or people. Challenges to Values often arouse emotional responses in these groups.

Volition: The conscious act of willing, choosing or resolving; the power to will, decide or choose; a choice or decision made by the will.  
From the Latin *volo* = “I will.”

## Annex C: Selected Propaganda Techniques

The reader is invited to see how many of these techniques have been used in some way by Communist propagandists, by American commercial or political entities, or by the Taliban to attain their objectives. Are there some techniques that you have used, or could put to good use? Following this list of techniques, there is a list of “loaded words” often used to flavor speeches or written propaganda pieces. You may have seen some of them.

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Association: This technique seeks to align the target audience’s aspirations (or their fears or prejudices) by association with some individual, political party, group, product, idea or ideal, policy or course of action that is already well known and understood by the target audience. Hence, the target comes to associate (for good or for ill) the propagandist’s new theme with “known quantities” (either good or ill.) The logic of the technique is that *“if A is good, and B is just like A, then B must also be good.”* Likewise, *“if C is known to be bad, and D is just another version of C, then D must also be bad.”* This is also sometimes known as the “Transfer” technique. It can be used when opening a new campaign or introducing new themes into an ongoing campaign.

Bandwagon: Bandwagon techniques succeed due to peer pressure and the target’s belief that he/she had best join the winning team as soon as possible. (No one rushes to join a clear loser.) The Bandwagon works best when the propagandist can point to several successes and prophesy credibly that more are on the way. This technique works well with uncommitted individuals and groups, especially if reinforced by clear, tangible incentives and rewards for climbing aboard NOW.

Inevitable victory: A subset of the Bandwagon effect is the “inevitable victory” approach which warns the enemy (and assures our friends) that our victory is certain, and that our enemy had best hasten to save his life and come over to our side (or drop out of the war) before it is too late. This works best when the enemy is convinced that if he does not “rally” he will face sure and certain capture or death. “Rallier” campaigns offer preferential treatment to those who voluntarily turn themselves in, or “rally” to the propagandist’s side.

Euphoria: Often associated with the Bandwagon technique, the propagandist can create a sense of euphoria if external events appear to be going well. Celebrations, parades, mass events, patriotic speeches, festivals and other upbeat activities – reinforced by constantly reminding the target audience of “how far we’ve come” and the “vital work remaining before us” – can create this glowing sense of achievement and general optimism.

Forbidden Fruit: This technique suggests that the adversary is trying to hide or suppress vital information that the propagandee needs to know. Known commercially as the “banned in Boston” approach, it will induce the target to seek out “what they don’t want you to know.” The propagandist can ask rhetorically “what else are they trying to hide?” or “Why are they afraid to give you what you want?” This is a powerful inducement.

Flag-waving: Here the propagandist makes no argument other than “flag and country.” No other justification is required assuming that the target audience is patriotic. This can also be used to whip up revenge, such as the “waving the bloody shirt” campaign after the Civil War. This technique is enhanced if combined with some incentive that holds promise of tangible benefit or advantage for the target audience.

Glittering Generality: A glittering generality is a slogan or statement that sounds on its face to be everyone’s ideal, but which, in fact, is not necessarily backed up by evidence or even reality. The glittering generality uses words appealing to the emotions, and often presenting a vision, but which may or may not be achievable. Examples: The Worker’s State; the Garden of Paradise; A chicken in every pot, etc.

Loaded Words: A subset of the glittering generality is the use of “loaded” words such as Freedom, Liberty, Commie, Democracy, Slavery, Peace, Jap, Nazi, Progress, Liberation, etc. {See word list following techniques.} In this technique, the buzzword automatically calls forth conditioned responses from the target audience thus providing a kind of “shorthand” for the propagandist’s messages. (NB. Certain symbols, such as swastika, hammer and sickle, cross, crescent and star, etc., have the same power.) Symbols and loaded words often are associated with campaigns of agitation.

Labeling: This technique, usually a negative approach, seeks to “brand” a product, party, individual, or group as something that the target should hate, fear, or find undesirable. If applied to a group, this is often simple stereotyping. Once something is labeled or “branded,” the target audience then expects all similar persons or things to be the same way as the propagandist has stated. Examples: “He’s an Uncle Tom.” “All Jews are that way.” “They are American puppets.”

Reactive: Propagandists often utilize a target audience’s baser instincts to advantage. These include fear, greed, prejudice, and pride. *Here little more than “stimulus and response” is employed to motivate the audience.* The propagandist exploits the target audience’s fears – whether rational or irrational – to show how taking a certain course of action is wise or foolish, given the “threat.” Appeals to greed point the target audience to some material benefit to be gained by obeying the propagandist. Prejudice often is fanned against minority groups, those holding opposing (ie. “wrong”) viewpoints, and persons and customs differing from those of the main audience. More positively, propagandists also can appeal to a target audience’s pride and sense of importance and self-worth, motivating them to action by a judicious dollop of shame – either for actions taken or for those not yet taken. The point of this technique is to cause the audience to “react” to an event or condition.

Reasonable Man: Every man, even the most dull-witted, thinks well of himself. He believes that he invariably makes wise, even shrewd, decisions. He believes that he cannot be outwitted. Always and everywhere he thinks himself “reasonable,” even clever. The propagandist plays on this trait – his ego – with judicious flattery (never overdone, however) that speaks to the “reasonable man” as “one who knows” and can easily “see the truth for himself.” The propagandist speaks in direct fashion with the “reasonable man” using common, daily terms that

the propagandee understands, often with the hint that – as intelligent as he is – the “reasonable man” can see through the clever, but obviously false opposing claims, and the truth of the propagandist.

Scapegoat: In the Old Testament, priests drove a goat into the desert to carry off the sins of the people. The propagandist fixes blame for sins, troubles, problems, and difficulties on a certain individual or well-defined group – the scapegoat – which then figuratively absolves the target audience of its guilt. From this point, the target audience can blame all later misfortunes and setbacks on the individual or group while the propagandist merely assures the target audience that it is fully justified in so doing.

Spin: A competent propagandist will never falsify hard facts, but he can and will “spin” them to suit his propaganda line. The propagandist can rationalize certain actions either to justify or to minimize certain unpleasant facts or questionable acts. He may employ phraseology known to please the target audience or to present the facts in a new manner that prepares the ground for the propagandist’s explanation of the cause and best resolution of the situation. While carefully avoiding concrete promises or claims, the propagandist will apply the force of his views to complex issues, reducing them to easily understood, simplified concepts that accord with the propagandist’s goals.

Selective Quotation: Propagandists often will use quotations taken out of context from religious texts, the works of famous scholars, or excerpts from enemy statements. By carefully editing certain texts, the propagandist can “spin” the quotation sometimes 180 degrees. Selective quotation of an enemy, if carefully done, can be used to undermine the enemy’s political, economic, religious or moral position, and destroy his credibility with a target audience. The risk in this is that if the technique is not carefully employed, the enemy can use counterpropaganda methods to damage one’s own credibility.

Testimonial or Endorsement: A testimonial is the public affirmation by a well-known or credible personality that a certain product, policy, candidate or course of action is best (or conversely, bad) for the members of the target audience. Key communicators fill this role admirably, if they perceive their own interests advanced in some way.

Celebrity: With celebrities, the power of an endorsement lies in the target’s desire to be “just like the celebrity,” or to do as the celebrity does. A good example – in former days — was the impact on golfers when Tiger Woods endorsed a certain line of golf equipment. People like “Che” Guevara or Osama bin-Laden carry this same “celebrity” status with certain audiences. Often celebrities bring a certain charisma to the task of persuading others. Many fans identify with a particular celebrity and accept the celebrity’s views as their own on that basis alone.

Expert: The appeal from an expert is based upon that person’s recognized knowledge or expertise. A good example is the impact on health-conscious persons when former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop speaks about the dangers of smoking or health issues. Experts are not necessarily charismatic, but their testimony exploits a target’s desire to

avoid “bad” consequences and strive for “good” results. The reputation of an expert is vital to target audience compliance.

Kiss of Death: This is a “boomerang” effect to be avoided at all costs by propagandists when a party, group, policy, or course of action receives an endorsement from the “wrong quarter” or is successfully “labeled” by the opposing propagandist. Example: a known criminal formally backs our candidate for mayor. {We don’t want that!} Opposing propagandists can and will exploit this “Kiss of Death endorsement” to the hilt.

Us vs. Them: Here the propagandist divides the world into two camps – the Good Camp consisting of ourselves and our valiant allies and friends, and the Bad Camp of our enemies and their (evil) friends and stooges. No room is left for neutrals or those who wish to stay uninvolved. *“If you are not with us, you are against us.”* This technique polarizes the target audience. It works if the propagandist’s side holds the clear moral, physical, and psychological high ground, but is otherwise risky.

### **Loaded Words Used by Propagandists**

**“Where you stand on an issue depends largely on where you sit.”**

Fraternal assistance	Imperialist intervention
Liberation forces	Mercenaries, fascists
Honest citizens	Gangsters, criminals
Champions, heroes	Hoodlums, thugs
“Shield for peace”	“Fearsome weapons of war”
Freedom	Slavery
Heroic defense	Naked aggression
Boundary adjustment	Boundary encroachment
Logical conclusion	Sheer madness
Solid evidence	Trumped up, fabricated
Persuasion	Blackmail
Law and order	Fascist repression
Reasonable settlement	Unwarranted provocation
Hard fact	Bald-face lie
True, genuine	Sham, bogus
Fair deal	Cheap trick

## Annex D: “Just a Speech”

At one point in what passes for the author’s career, the author served as a cabinet-level speechwriter and became fully cognizant of the art of crafting a speech with both audience and effects in mind. As a speechwriter, the author became fully aware that if the right word is spoken in the right way and at the right time to a prepared and receptive ear, *that spoken word has the power to change the world, indeed to change history*. Master public speakers such as Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill fully realized the power of the spoken word. Even to this day we still draw inspiration from the words spoken by great Classical orators such as Pericles, Thucydides, Cato and Cicero. By the same token, when a speech wanders off point, uses jargon, or baffles its audience it ceases being a sharp sword to stir both heart and mind, becoming instead a weapon of mass distraction.

The following excerpt is taken from a late 1985 issue of the “Speechwriter’s Newsletter” and is, in the author’s opinion, the Last Word on what a speech is and how it should be carefully crafted. By extension, the care taken in crafting a speech for its audience extends to all facets of propaganda and political warfare. As noted in this excerpt, many military officers and even chief executives tend to brush off their public addresses as “just another speech.” If they do so, they fail to comprehend the power that the spoken word has in the right circumstances, and leave unused their greatest weapon for change.

I have italicized a line in the last paragraph of this note that is of special importance to the practitioner. We also must be mindful of Bernays’ observation that: *“The leaders who lend their authority to any propaganda campaign will do so only if it can be made to touch their own interests.”*

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### “Just a Speech”

In the best business speeches – as in the best of them by President Reagan – we discern evidence of extraordinary attention to the needs and propensities of the audience. I’ve been working lately with a senior manager on a talk to be delivered in another country. I’ve been astonished at the extent to which he and his senior counselors analyze – and agonize over – the likely effects of every word upon their audience. I conclude that the writers of any major speech should take horrendous pains to learn about their audience if they have the time and the resources to do so.

No matter what question I ask this executive about his audience (eg., “What proportion has been educated in the West?” or “What is the background of the women you say will attend?”), he or one of the advisors knows the answer. The nature of the audience had influenced everything they drafted before they called me. They know, for example, the name of every important individual likely to be there, and in some cases where each will be seated. At one point I asked, “Will saying this upset the Planning Minister?” and my client thought it over and said he had no choice but to retain the sentence. He turned to one of his counselors and said, “Watch how he reacts when I say this.” The aide replied, “No problem: he always sits on the aisle in the second row.”



What's more, there is something in this speech for every significant power to be represented in the audience. It is as if you and I were to say: "There will be 50 lawyers in the hall, led by so-and-so. What can we tell lawyers, or promise lawyers, or seem to be promising lawyers, that will induce them to agree with our goal and help us attain it? And what does their leader, Mr. So-and-so, like to hear on this topic? Of course, we'll have finance people there, too – accountants and controllers – perhaps three dozen. What will induce the bean-counters to accept our premise and jump eagerly onto our bandwagon?"

If we raised this last point in the group with which I have lately been working, someone would ask at once: "Who will be in the hall to whom these finance people look for leadership?" And the team would gnaw at that bone till we had identified him; then we'd put some nugget in the speech to tickle his fancy and incline him to start nodding his head.

In the course of revising an early draft, we discussed every important person likely to be out front. What was in the draft that he would like? Was there anything to upset him? If there were, did we require it? If we really needed it, could we word it in a way that was least upsetting – and perhaps even throw a diverting bone to that august personage just before the passage capable of disturbing him? I marveled at the depth and thoroughness of the analysis for something that is, as we writers are often advised, "just a speech."

As I write this, the talk is still under construction. I do not know how successful it will be. *I suspect it will be a hit because of the meticulous care taken to fit it to its audience – a passion to do all we can for them if we expect them to do anything at all for us.* Most speakers don't take such pains; neither do most writers. But when these relaxed folk come up against the A-Team – the sort of people I've been working with this week – can you entertain the slightest doubt about who's going to win? – Q.E.D.

## Annex E: Ideas for Strategic Use

Following are seven ideas that can be employed by a competent indigenous strategic political warfare unit with a minimum of friendly coaching and advice. All seven are relatively low-cost, but brainpower intensive (which may cause a problem for some.)

Each idea is adaptable for a mass audience, but even at the strategic or national level the adviser or head of the political warfare unit must heed Ellul's ringing observation that all propaganda must be addressed *as if it is to one individual if it is to be effective*.

When propaganda is addressed to a crowd, it must touch each individual in that crowd, in that whole group. To be effective, it must give the impression of being personal, for we must never forget that the mass is composed of individuals, and is in fact nothing but assembled individuals.<sup>104</sup>

Good propaganda must speak to each individual personally.

The seven strategic ideas in order of march are, from simplest to most complex: Mobilize Humor; Turn Pens into Swords; A Song in the Air; Essay and Oratorical Contests; Poster and Photo Contests; Clear Copy; and Honor our Martyrs. Best of all, as you develop a rolling thunder propaganda campaign at the national or regional level, you can make use of any combination of these campaign ideas at any time. Indeed, in order to ensure repetition and saturation of your audience, it is wise to have several of these activities going on simultaneously. And several of these ideas, in miniature and simplified, can be run at province or district level.

This section is written specifically for propaganda advisors who will serve in the capital or in major regional centers, but tacticians on the front lines should read these ideas so that they understand clearly what is being done nationally and why.

Practitioners at the strategic level must keep in mind that (broadly) their target audiences are located in the major cities, among the major ethnic groups in Afghanistan, and above all, in foreign capitals. Their focus must be on strategic themes that will resonate with audiences in key foreign lands and among the "nationalists" at home.

### 1. Mobilize Humor!

All peoples and cultures have their distinct styles of humor. Often, humor does not "translate" well from one culture to another—witness the flatness of "British humor" on American audiences and vice versa. However, nothing does more to break tension and restore morale than good humor, well timed. Also, humor can and often is used as a weapon. *In this area, special care must be taken as humor is subtle and very hard for a propagandist of one culture to manufacture for another.* But if jokes and humorous jingles damaging to the enemy are "on the mark" they will spread like wildfire, causing him discomfiture as he is laughed at by one and all.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ellul, p. 7

<sup>105</sup> Author wishes to make clear that he is here referring to humor developed by Afghans for other Afghans.

Method. Carefully select two or three Afghans whom you have already vetted. Your selectees should have reputations for jollity and be well known for their ability to laugh and joke even in hard times. Education, background or social class of your selectees does not matter. What matters is their possession of a robust sense of humor, imagination, proven creativity, and ability to crystallize in a few well-chosen words what needs to be said – humorously.

Take your little group to a quiet, safe location. Tell them that their “mission” is to come up with funny jingles, jokes, one-liners, plays on words, etc., with the butt of the joke being the nasty insurgents and their Al-Qaeda allies. The richer and rawer their humor the better—so long as the jokes and jingles are culturally appropriate and elicit gut-busting laughter. For each such masterpiece an agreed sum in money or food is to be paid. Then leave the Jolly Jokers to their work.

In two or three days your Jolly Work Crew should have originated at least a couple good jokes and epithets. However, before you disseminate this material, be absolutely sure to pre-test each item. Have the new joke told to several Afghans who are not witting of the Work Crew’s existence or efforts. Gauge their reaction. Test the joke with other small groups of Afghans. If the material elicits a reaction to the effect of: *“That’s a good one, I’ll have to remember that,”* you have a Winner on your hands. But if you get from your sample audiences the opposite test result: *“Pew—you think that’s FUNNY?”* you do not use the material under any circumstances. Period.

Now, as to the Winners. As soon as pre-testing is completed, start seeding out the jokes and jingles to the general public through Afghan channels only. Do not use all your material at once. Hold some good stuff back. But get the humor campaign underway. As the general public begins to laugh, the enemy will begin to chafe. Unless the guerrillas are able to laugh at themselves (which is not likely, being grim murderers) they will react in a nasty manner. All to the good! We have just revealed them for the vicious rotters that they are. We’ve scored a propaganda point.

Let the jokes and jingles roll! You can defeat an enemy with pointed humor. The more the general public laughs at the Taliban or Hekmatyar’s goons, the weaker they become. Who wants to support – much less join – a ludicrous laughingstock??

Keep your Jolly Jokers cranking out the Good Ones. They are more valuable to you than three brigades of infantry. For if the people begin to laugh at their enemies, despite all the pain and anguish that the insurgents cause, the Taliban’s power of fear is broken. Once that power is broken – through public ridicule – it can never be restored.

## 2. Pens into Swords

We’ve just discussed the idea of using humor as a weapon. We outlined the need to have three or four Jolly Jokers produce a steady output of jokes, jingles, one liners, puns and so forth in Pashto and Dari that not only place the insurgents in a ridiculous light, but in a bad light to boot.

Make no mistake: if you can get the people to laugh at their common enemy, you have robbed the guerrilla of his power to harm them.

Now, let's consider the visual and graphic arts. Bring those into play. Beat your pens into swords. We are talking about funny cartoons, graffiti, even the employment of true, serious fine art in your revolutionary struggle. This is "war of the pen," after all!

Method: Identify the two or three best "barracks artists" in all Afghanistan. Talented artists are out there, trust me. Afghanistan has a heritage of art stretching back two thousand years. These are the fellows who spend their time drawing exquisite pen and ink or pencil "grams" on the *chaikhana* walls. Some of these guys are really good. Bring them in, and sit down with them for a cup of tea. You've a special assignment for them.

Your Jolly Jokers have by now produced a number of rollicking jokes about the enemy that actually resonate positively with the locals. The people have learned to laugh at the Bad Guys. Now take these same verbal concepts and have your artists commit them to paper in the form of cartoons. You might even come up with an Afghan equivalent of beloved immortal cartoon characters like Sad Sack or Willie and Joe.

The idea is to show how long-suffering Afghan Sad Sack copes with (and eventually outwits or beats) Gulbuddin, Omar, and their cretins. You could even come up with clumsy, oaf-like Brer Fox or Brer Bear caricatures of leading insurgents. Like heroic little Brer Rabbit, who always foils his dangerous, but stupid, enemies, our heroic Afghan Brer Rabbit may be victimized today—but he will win in the end. This effort should be tied to the civil government side of the effort, and focused on what the Afghan people are trying to do at the local and district level.

This wit and wisdom is very much in Afghan tradition. Consider the rich heritage of witticisms by the mythical Nasruddin. There is also in the breast of every Pashtun the desire to come out on top when dealing with those who injure him. To get a sense of this desire, and the Afghan perspective on life, consider reading an excellent book called Pashtun Tales.

Again, be sure to PRE-TEST every cartoon produced with a small sample target audience of local Afghans. If the sample audience reacts positively, print the cartoons by the thousand and disseminate them. But if your sample audience finds the humor "off the mark" or it misses the point of the cartoon—then it is (literally) back to the drawing board. Stick closely to the proven successes in your joke campaign, at least initially.

And if your Awesome Artists come up with a beloved cartoon figure like Beetle Bailey or Charlie Brown, who is purely Afghan in every sense of the word, spin out episode after episode. You won't have trouble disseminating your material. The public will seek it out, perhaps even form "fan clubs."

Through the political warfare unit's established "underground" among the people, start up a graffiti campaign. Distribute cans of spray paint (fine nozzles) to these folks—red, green and black are appropriate—and have them spray graffiti of your slogans on all the walls in town. As discussed, your slogans should be at sharp odds with those of the enemy. Where you see enemy

graffiti—leave it, but attempt to give it a humorous, even vulgar, “twist.” That is, add a word, or change a letter or two so that your enemy’s messages come out NOT what he wants the public to hear. Make him look like an idiot. Twist the enemy’s words and you twist his tail! Painfully. His credibility is on the line. Here is where you can and should use Imitative Deception!!

There is also serious art. Perhaps in Kabul and other large cities there are serious art students who have genuine world-class talent. Immediately commission a Chagall-like work of art to be done by the student(s) with a cash prize or other reward attached. The theme or idea of the artwork should, of course, advance your political goal of separating the people from the guerrillas. It could be a painting like Pablo Picasso’s “Bombing of Guernica” or a sculpture like that in Rotterdam commemorating the bombing of that city by the Luftwaffe in 1940. Whatever the actual art produced, it should be something of museum quality that the local people themselves relate to and take pride in.

Either through the embassy or the Ministry of Culture, you might even be able to arrange scholarships for one or two of the best Afghan art students. Publicize their work and laud their talent as “cultural ambassadors” of the Afghan people. This brings the people yet another step closer to you.

Capturing the initiative with serious art also has the indirect effect of bringing over the educated, intellectual elites of a community. If you are boosting the arts, and the enemy is doing nothing—indeed, doing his usual Neanderthalish *destruction* of art—you can easily win this key target audience. If you capture the psychological high ground with the intellectual elite, you gain powerful allies in the political struggle.

### 3. A Song in the Air

Music is an important art form and medium of communication in most cultures. Music often captures moods and emotions, tells of hopes and dreams, and recounts the deeds of both heroes and villains. Probably no other medium in history has been as effective in reaching across inter-cultural boundaries as music.

Like any other art form, music can be (indeed has been) effectively used to mobilize and direct political action. One of the best historical examples is the music of Verdi. An Italian patriot, Verdi knew exactly what he was saying to his countrymen in *Nabucco*<sup>106</sup> when he used the “captive Israelites in Babylon” as stand-ins for the Italian people then under Austrian rule. Both patricians and paupers went around Milan openly singing excerpts from Verdi’s opera. The Austrian censors obviously could not prevent persons from singing. Thus, despite Austrian occupation and censorship, Verdi’s lyrics helped keep alive Italian hopes for eventual freedom and national unification.

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<sup>106</sup> Nabucco is the Italian for Nebuchanezzar, the tyrannical king of Babylon who enslaved the Israelites. Giuseppe Verdi’s name (by chance) also aided the cause of independence. His last name, written on walls as graffiti, stood for Vittorio Emanuele, Re Di Italia – Victor Emanuel, King of Italy. The Austrians, then occupying Milan and the province of Lombardy, were powerless to stop the music or erase Verdi’s name.

Method: Sponsor a contest of songwriters. Have each entrant write a popular song with original music and lyrics—the lyrics being along the general lines of one or another of your more popular jingles or themes. (The lyrics obviously should NOT copy the jingle, but *definitely* must echo the same general political idea.) Your political warfare unit can designate the theme for the songs that will be entered.

A variant of this idea is to sponsor a national poetry contest, again having contestants enter poems supporting a certain designated theme. Pashtuns love great poems and their heritage is replete with figures like Khushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba, both noted for their poetry.<sup>107</sup>

Have the entrants compete and award prizes for the best songs written. Select a panel of judges from among teachers and notable citizens you hope to influence – NOT officials of the government. And don't stop with merely one contest. Have contests once in every quarter. You can also have contests at the province level.

Now you need a singer, if that is culturally appropriate. Cultures vary concerning who might be acceptable in this role. [NB. In Saudi Arabia, for example, it may not be acceptable to have a female voice. You will have to make that determination locally.] But if your indigenous political warfare unit is culturally sensitive, no first magnitude gaffes of a cultural order will occur.

In a certain Latin American country, a songwriting contest was sponsored in which a young lady of 15 came up the winner with a marvelous “Peace” song that she wrote and performed herself. [She was a kind of Latin American Susan Boyle.] Her song supported the country's political warfare goals perfectly. With help from a local studio, the young lady recorded her song. Arrangements then were made for broadcast of her recording over several popular radio stations. The song proved a national hit and the young lady became a star. Best of all, the song was so popular that—as in the case of Verdi 150 years earlier—ordinary people went around singing it. When people sing your message you know you are “communicating” effectively.

Brighten up the airwaves with popular songs about how Afghanistan is being “born anew” and, despite difficulties and setbacks created by the insurgents, peace and freedom are on the horizon. It just might become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

#### 4. Essay and Oratorical Contests

Down through the ages the ability to speak or write has been decisive in human affairs. Virtually all of history's greatest leaders were able speakers or writers. For it is the ability to communicate orally or in writing that shapes public opinion, sets in motion great events, and largely determines the course of human destiny.

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<sup>107</sup> Professor James Caron, University of Pennsylvania, has made a compelling case that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century poet Malang Jan was free to express deep social and political discontent with official backing. Afghan poets, by virtue of their art, have freedom of expression often denied to journalists and politicians.

Some persons are born Solons or men-of-letters. Most of us have to work at these skills. But whether inborn or won by hard effort, most of us can become competent speakers or writers. What is required is a desire to master the skills and an opportunity to practice.

Method: One of the your key target audiences remains high school age students. This is for two reasons. First, the younger groups tend to be more open toward the West and its peculiar culture of jeans, pop music, and cult figures. Second, the young people are less likely to be wedded psychologically to Mullah Omar as a “father figure,” or to have a stake in the overthrown Taliban regime. They are thus able to think more independently than perhaps would be the case with their elders.

Through the school officials and local authorities, sponsor contests for young people in oratory and in writing essays. As with artwork, the essays and speeches should follow the general lines of one or another of your main anti-Taliban themes. The central thrust should be “*moving Afghanistan toward a bright new day and away from the bloody and despotic past.*” Now, how the kids play with the words is their business.

Each contestant delivers his or her speech. [NB. If local Islamic culture does not permit young women to speak in public, then the contest must be limited to boys.] A panel of judges—not related to any of the contestants—selects a Grand Prize winner, several first, second, and third place winners, and as many Honorable Mentions as humanly possible.

Arrange for the Grand Prize winner to deliver his (or her) speech in Kabul – with full press coverage, obviously. This can be arranged through military or civilian authorities in the capital. With a little forethought, we can arrange for publication of the text of the speech in newspapers and on the Internet. All winners should receive some material reward or recognition.

Ditto the arrangements for the essay contest. The essays should be judged in part on the quality of the contestant’s writing style, but content is the key. If the essay hits on one or more of the main themes you are promoting, and *also* is well written, then it should be considered for an award. Here again, the Grand Prize winner should get a trip to Kabul, and prizes distributed as widely as possible to all other contestants.

Your psychological objective is to split this vital target audience away from the guerrillas and turn it to the business of influencing parents and kinsmen and the general public. By investing modestly in young people today, Afghanistan will reap political benefits in the years to come. As American folk wit has it, “*There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.*” Start today.

## 5. Poster and Photo Contests

Low literacy rates often prove a barrier for communicating with Third World peoples. However, art is universal. Pictures speak to anyone who can see. As the Chinese proverb has it: “*A picture is worth a thousand words.*” The best graphic art needs no captioning or explanation whatsoever. The photo or illustration says it all.

Once again, the main object is to involve as many people as possible in the propaganda effort you are undertaking. Political mobilization is absolutely essential, and one way of promoting this mobilization is by offering a design or photo contest to young people.

Method: The political warfare unit sponsors a Poster or Photo Contest targeted at high school age youth. You start by contacting the principals or directors of all local schools having youth aged from 12-20. Secure their active interest by offering concrete incentives to each school offering to participate in the contest. If a school director sees “something in it for him” he will buy into the Poster or the Photo contest idea.

Now, the Poster contest itself is fairly straightforward. The students are challenged to come up with poster designs condemning insurgent violence and mayhem. Posters should focus on the Peace theme, civil rights, a “new, democratic Afghanistan” and similar positive themes. In fact, a poster is valid that picks on any theme that is at variance with the insurgents’ political program.

Photos should show progress made by Afghan civil governments at the local level, or dramatic shots of Afghans doing heroic work on behalf of the people.

The children do their work in a specified period. At close of the contest, a panel of judges consisting of prominent local Afghans (mayor, elders, respected citizens, etc.) will select the contest winners. Obviously, there should be as many “winners” and “honorable mentions” as is humanly possible.

The winning students—and their parents—should be invited to school events at each participating school to receive worthwhile prizes for their efforts. A school assembly is ideal since it is relatively safe and secure and offers an excellent platform for speeches.

The best posters now belong to the political warfare unit. The best posters now can be printed up in the hundreds and posted everywhere. Find every possible wall and fence. Up with the posters!! Everywhere.

The photos can be seeded through the international media to give the world a view of Afghanistan pulling itself up by its bootstraps despite barbarian attacks on its people.

Once again, you have driven a wedge between the guerrillas and the people. The Bad Guys will, of course, tear down a number of posters. Fine. Now you speak with the local press, elders, and general public: “*Why do you think the insurgents hate and fear the very positive goals and thoughts of your children and youth???*” Fine question!

You have taken another step toward getting the local people to commit themselves to your program and goals. Best of all, it is done by the Afghans themselves.

## 6. Clear Copy

One of the limitations of operating in many Third World countries is the relatively low rate of literacy. In cities literacy tends to be somewhat higher than in rural areas. But one thing needs



to be kept in mind: *the people most likely to be literate also are the persons most likely to be leaders in their communities*—the “Key Communicators” about whom we have spoken. These are many of the people you want to influence.

In order to stay in business, newspapers by their nature depend upon a steady stream of news and feature items. If there is nothing for a publisher to print, then there is no need for me to buy his newspaper. You are doing the publisher or editor a great favor by giving him “copy”—material he can use to fill in the spaces between the advertising. Generally, in rural areas, the “standards of journalism” are significantly lower than might be the case in a major city. (This, of course, works to our advantage!) Tabloids have their uses.

Method: Make an inventory of all the newspapers circulating locally. You don’t care at this point what their editorial slant is—you are more concerned with circulation. Which of these has the greatest popularity? What newspapers cater to which special audiences? Why? Initially you will be dependent upon Press Releases and news items drafted by your Afghan writers. However, as you succeed in getting this material placed, you will make some new contacts with the reportorial staffs of the various newspapers. Cultivate these gentlemen—there will probably be one or two with whom you will develop a close friendship. Be sure to have some good “copy” for these guys regularly. Remember that the more columns they can publish, the more food they can put on the table for their kids.

As everyone knows, sensational news sells the most papers. But if this week you don’t have something sensational, at least have something interesting. Feature material always is needed when there is no “Holy Cow!” story to be had. Local CivAc projects, photos of happy school children, positive contacts between Afghans and their local governments, commendations of local citizens for their achievements qualify as feature material. The important thing is to have something each week. Now and then you should craft a straight “op-ed” piece that asks questions of the civilian population (rhetorically) about how beneficial a return to the Old Taliban Order would be. Taunt the guerrillas in other pieces. Ask them provocative questions. Although most Afghans are illiterate, and will not read your “copy,” your Clear Copy target audiences will come from the leaders of the community—people who DO read the newspapers. Shape *their* thinking and they will pull along many of the illiterates with them. Remember, too, that such stories can be “exported” to capitals in the Islamic world and beyond. Here the payoff for the unit is increased foreign support for the government.

The guerrillas also read newspapers. So speak to them through the printed word. Raise questions they cannot answer. Cite facts they cannot refute. Embarrass them in print. Win the battle of moral supremacy by demonstrating to the guerrillas that what they are doing not only is negative, but ineffective and rejected by the overwhelming majority of Afghans. If carefully done, your dominance of the press will reassure the public and seriously worry the insurgents. Positive campaigns based upon a national Cause will have this impact.

## 7. Honor our Martyrs

Lincoln’s greatest speech obviously was that delivered at Gettysburg. In his speech, Lincoln crystallized the Union’s war aims and held out the promise of postwar “binding the nation’s wounds.” But of vital importance to the Northern Cause was Lincoln’s transformation of the

thousands of Union Army dead into martyrs and heroes. *“It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion...”*<sup>108</sup>

Think about what the man said. In one sentence Lincoln elevated the tragic deaths of his soldiers to martyrdom for a holy cause. (How far we have sunk from Abraham Lincoln’s great vision when today, instead of being treated as the martyrs and heroes that they are, our valiant soldiers who die in the cause of liberty are treated as statistics: “KIA’s.”)

Now then, is an Afghan death in the cause of liberty any less precious than an American death?? What about all those policemen and civilians who have been murdered by the guerrillas? Shall we just ignore these people and pretend they don’t exist??

A great black mark on the Karzai regime was its callous disregard of the murder of the Maulvi Abdullah Fayezi in late May 2005. This man had organized a thousand-mullah conference in Kandahar that formally de-frocked Mullah Omar and proclaimed that the religious people of Afghanistan now accepted Hamid Karzai as their legitimate leader. The conference itself, and the “transfer” of religious legitimacy from Omar to Karzai was an act of profound political and psychological significance. The Maulvi Fayezi did this despite many Taliban threats to his life. Indeed, a week after the conference, Taliban goons shot and killed Fayezi. What was the reaction of the Karzai government? Silence. Deafening silence. Maulvi Fayezi was most surely a martyr for peace and for the Afghan people, yet the Karzai regime allowed his memory to vanish almost as soon as he was buried. Truly, the Maulvi Fayezi died in vain – robbed of the martyrdom he had earned.

Insurgents never make the mistake of failing to honor their martyrs. Consider, for example, that forty years after his death, Ernesto “Che” Guevara is *still* held up by many as a “martyr” for radical causes. You can buy tee-shirts with his image, if you wish. Or posters. Or even see his image on walls to this day. “Che” is iconic.

What the practitioner must always keep in mind is that a martyr is a powerful symbol of a Cause. Indeed, a martyr “lives” forever. Not only that, martyrs become more powerful in death than they were in life. If the enemy creates martyrs for us, they must be continually honored. We should beware, however, of creating martyrs out of our enemies. Better that they end up going to prison like Abimael Guzman, former head of Peru’s Sendero Luminoso, than appearing like “Che” on posters and walls forever.

Method: Your goal is to make our cause and the Afghan cause identical. If we truly believe that we are trying to bring peace, stability and a measure of democracy to Afghanistan, then let us show that we are “in solidarity” with those Afghans who are on the front lines of the struggle. These are the same individuals who are dying because they have cast their lot with us, and with the government in Kabul. We have a moral obligation to keep faith with those who work with us in our common cause. And we have a special obligation to those who die in that cause.

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<sup>108</sup> Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, 19 November 1863

NEVER ignore the death of any Afghan elected official, civil servant, policeman, or civilian who is killed “in line of duty.” Honor that man (or woman) as you would one of our own. Console the family; help them materially if it is within your power to do so. Grieve with them and, if permitted, take part in the funeral service. If bidden, give a brief eulogy (in simple, heartfelt English that an interpreter can easily and accurately translate for the group of mourners.)

Cause to be printed images of the decedent along with highlights of his distinguished career or heroic service. The bottom line should read “*died heroically in defense of his country’s freedom*” or some such. In the press, be quoted as saying that you take it as your sworn duty to “*avenge the death of (name of martyr) no matter how long it takes.*” If, by chance, you DO bag the murderer or murderers—ensure they are tried publicly by Afghans in accordance with local law. (Islamic law would be very nice, here.)

Meanwhile, portraits of all martyrs should be placed in prominent public locations.<sup>109</sup> You should organize appropriate solemn ceremonies to honor their memory. Take pains to remind the public that these martyrs died so that Afghanistan might live in peace and freedom. They “did not die in vain,” but sacrificed themselves so that “you, their fellow citizens” might have a bright future. Or, as Lincoln would say, that Afghanistan should have “a new birth of freedom.”

The sad reality is that there will be much more blood and death before a semblance of peace returns to Afghanistan. Those who die in our common cause should not die nameless and forgotten, but honored. They are martyrs. Ensure they are treated as such.

**Now it is Your Turn to Come Up with Strategic Ideas.**

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<sup>109</sup> In part, this is being done. Ahmad Shah Masood’s image is widely seen in Kabul and the north. But the author has yet to see posters of Pashtun or other martyrs who died for the Republic.

## Annex F: Ideas for Tactical Use

Following are seven ideas that can be employed by any forward unit, Afghan or American, deployed just about anywhere. They are relatively low-cost, but brainpower intensive. The ideas involve very little by way of equipment or technology. They do require ingenuity and “sweat equity.”

Some ideas may not be immediately useful in your Area of Operations. Fine. Read them and move on to other ideas that are applicable. Or develop your own ideas. Whatever you do, *remember that positive contact with the people is your goal*. Involve your Afghan National Army colleagues in your programs at every appropriate opportunity.

Each of the ideas given here is adaptable for local audiences, but the company commander or platoon leaders should be mindful of Ellul’s advice that all words and deeds must stay at the *ordinary everyday level of the people*.

Propaganda must stay at the human level. It must not propose aims so lofty that they will seem inaccessible; this creates the risk of a boomerang effect. Propaganda must confine itself to simple, elementary messages...without fear of being ridiculous. It must speak the most simple, everyday language, familiar, individualized – the language of the group that is being addressed, and the language with which a person is familiar.<sup>110</sup>

The seven ideas in order of march are, from simplest to most complex: Jihad of the Pen; Kids’ Day Kamp; Doing What Needs to be Done; Playgrounds and Parks; Family Day; Festival; and Everyman a Propagandist. Best of all, as you develop a viable local influence campaign, you can make use of any combination of these seven ideas. All are capable of “mix or match.” Moreover, despite the fact that you do not have at local level the same resources available to the national political warfare staff in the capital, you nonetheless have the most powerful of the three families of propaganda at your fingertips – *Direct propaganda*. This is propaganda of the deed, of the spoken word, of the handshake, of the smile. Use it well.

Remember also that what you do at the local level can support what is being done by the strategic unit in the capital. Regularly feed text, photos, and feature items to Kabul. And where possible, capitalize on national programs for local impact in your programs.

### 1. Jihad of the Pen

One of the greatest bridges between human beings is that of teaching. It bridges gaps between those of different generations, different nations, and different cultures. Teaching is yet another form of propaganda, though perhaps a more subtle form. For teaching is never devoid of context, that is, it is never done in a vacuum. Rather, teaching is conducted by human beings based upon the needs of society and of individuals and of the teacher’s own perspectives and opinions.

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<sup>110</sup> Ellul, p. 38

With due respect, one does not need a Ph.D. in order to be a great teacher. Teachers come in all manner of social classes, educational levels, and temperaments. What is required is thorough knowledge of a particular art or skill, and the ability to communicate that art or skill to another human being. Believe it or not, many soldiers can do this.

Method: Meet with the local officials, school directors and others knowledgeable of the community to determine what trades and skills the young people wish to learn. If some wish to master passages from the Holy Qur'an, that is best left to the madrassa. But if some young men would like to learn how to repair tires, or fix engines, or weld, I see an opportunity here. Ditto those young persons who are trying to learn some English, or subjects like history, geography, or math. Or even improve their skill in some athletic team sport. The desire for training and education is virtually limitless.

U.S. soldiers come from a native land rich with skills and abilities. In any battalion there are soldiers who can: repair tires, weld, play soccer or teach English, to name but a few things. Some of our Afghan National Army partners also have skills and the ability to teach them – officers could teach Dari and Pashto, for example.

The trick is to inventory what “special skills” and abilities exist in your unit and the neighboring ANA unit and match these up with the educational needs of the community's youth. You won't be able to make a perfect match of their needs with your capabilities. But you will find a high degree of correlation—higher than you might at first imagine.

Consider, for example, the worldwide demand to learn English. People, especially young people, clamor for instruction because they know that, through English, they can tap into a wide world “out there.” Surely there are officers, NCOs, and EM who can ably teach basic conversational classes. And at 20 or so students per class, you are potentially reaching several hundred local residents—because most students have parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, etc. By positively influencing ONE student, indirectly you will impact perhaps a whole family of eight, ten, or twelve! Do the math and you'll see you have influenced several hundred people.

This is equally true of Johnny Grease-Monkey in the motor pool who probably cannot put a subject before a verb—but he knows how to fix any engine ever built. Imagine Johnny's impact on a young Afghan if he can impart some of his expertise to that young man! The young man will have gained a “trade” skill—a way of making his living. And for the rest of his life he will thank God for Johnny and the USA.

We can also learn from the Afghans. How many soldiers are taking classes in basic Pashto or Dari? Well, you might say you are too busy. I don't buy it. You are never “too busy” to learn at least a smattering of the language of the country in which you are operating. And, as has been said, “the more you know, the farther you will go.” Operationally, that could be a very long way.

The point is to gain and sustain positive contact with the local people. Few ties exceed those that develop between a respected teacher and an eager student.

## 2. Kids' Day Kamp

Most people are willing to endure anything—or risk anything—for their children. Hence the key to winning the parents' cooperation (and eventually their active support) often lies in the way you treat their children. By showing special care and consideration for kids, Army units often can gain the trust of their parents. This could lead to valuable intelligence and operational advantages. The collection of parents together—after trust and cooperation have been built—offers a valuable forum for disseminating official information. It is also another mechanism for building viable local governments.

If it is possible to partner with a local Afghan National Army unit, classes for local children might be taught in both English and in Pashto or Dari, as is locally appropriate. This tiny move toward uplifting the literacy of Afghan children may not bear fruit for fifteen or twenty years, but if the effort is made today, it could eventually bring about a triumph over hatred and fanaticism that is fueled by ignorance.

Remember also the lesson taught us by the ancient Greek storyteller, Aesop: “*No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.*”<sup>111</sup>

Method: Unit identifies a sheltered building and area sufficient for a walled playground in a quiet area that is accessible to most citizens. “Kids furniture” (small tables, chairs, playground equipment, etc.) can be acquired locally or made by off-duty GI’s. Battalion staff can interview local young women and hire them as Day Care Attendants – under your careful supervision, of course. Needless to say, these young ladies need to be very carefully screened and vetted! But Pashtun society is normally well-disciplined, and Pashtuns are not inclined to maltreat children.

Paper, pens, crayons, art supplies and other materials can be supplied from CONUS through American Legion or other sources. Veterans’ organizations in particular are usually delighted to aid frontline units, but are seldom asked by Defense Department to do so. Since DOD won’t help here, have someone contact the American Legion or VFW back home for you. Tell the veterans what you need and why. They will deliver!

After the facilities have been prepared, start-up would involve leaflets in the local language (probably Pashto) and public announcements of a Day Care Center at the specified location, hours of operation, and the availability there of a medical dispensary for children. Since the Kids Kamp is available gratis, and one meal is offered, the parents will be drawn like flies to a lamp.

The staff will conduct a program of instruction and physical education for the children under your careful supervision. When appropriate, and with the parents’ consent, the Center’s dispensary can administer simple medical care (viz. the “school nurse.”) The parents should be given to understand that, because of the Kids Kamp, they are free to work during the day while their kids are being taken care of in a safe environment.

At a certain point, the parents should be brought into closer contact with the Kamp. It may be possible to have parents construct kids furniture, for example (paid!) Or, they could help with

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<sup>111</sup> Aesop, The Lion and the Mouse.

entertainment and physical education. Actually, any meaningful involvement of the parents brings them into closer contact with YOU—and that is the objective. Whatever brings you into positive contact with the local people is good.

The result of this investment is win/win. The kids grow up trusting and liking you and the American ideal. The parents, who may at first be reticent or reluctant, will realize that you mean only good things; you are beneficial to them. After a time, they will come to trust you. That means they will share their thoughts with you and do things for you. Best of all, they will be ready to receive and believe information you provide to them.

Let's suppose the enemy attempts to disrupt the Kids Kamp. (Not likely, but possible.) IF the enemy were so foolish as to do this, can you imagine the impact on the parents and the kids?? *This act would do more than anything to undercut popular support for the bad guys and to portray you as having the local people's true interests at heart.*

### 3. Doing What Needs to be Done

Often overlooked is the desperate need for stable, effective local government. In fact, it is at the local level where insurgencies are won or lost. Often, people are so fed up with inefficiency and corruption at the town or village level that they become easy prey for an insurgent's promises. Unfortunately, Third World societies are prone to the very ills that make revolution and upheaval an attractive political alternative.

Yet it is by building effective local governments that most insurgencies can be defeated. For if we bind the local people to a local government—a *government in which the local people have a voice and a "stake,"*—rebels have no blandishments to offer.

Method: Working very carefully with the legitimate local authorities, suggest that local citizens' councils in fairly small precincts be established by election.<sup>112</sup> These councils should hold "precinct meetings" at which local citizens are encouraged to suggest repairs or improvements urgently needed in each locality.

Each precinct council is challenged to come up with its plan for development. Again, the goal is the economic and social betterment of the people living in that area. It is certain that no two plans will be exactly identical, though some may have development features in common (for example, repairing main roads, irrigation canals, etc.)

YOU are in a position to motivate the local authorities by offering technical assistance, where truly needed, or financial assistance. A good example might be arranging for an Engineer battalion to send a bulldozer or road-grader, or an auger if drilling is required. In the main, however, ALL projects should be labor-intensive, not equipment heavy. Better to have 100 men with shovels, all paid, than one bulldozer (and no local men hired)! The object is to get as many

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<sup>112</sup> Promotion of competent, effective local government is not in conflict with the Afghan government's focus on central control as expressed in Article 137 of the Constitution. Rather, effective local government is a worthy and popular extension of Kabul's authority into rural areas.

local citizens as possible deeply involved in local civil government projects. Remember that unemployment stands at 40%.

You can use the opportunity to have the press give coverage to local projects, mentioning names of those prominent in their conception or construction. Take pains to show how the efforts of local men have greatly improved the local situation. Recognize some of the really outstanding individuals by cash awards, food, or other desirable goods.

By all means, induce the local Afghan National Army commander to take part in local projects desired by the community. In a very real sense, it is far more important that the ANA conduct these activities than that you do them. After all, this is their country and their war. Our goal is to bind the Afghan people to their own institutions.

As each local project is completed, arrange for an awards ceremony replete with food and entertainment, music and speeches. This is your payoff, as it affords you an opportunity to *showcase what the local citizens can do for themselves with your help.*

History has shown that people are more willing to cooperate with occupying forces that bring tangible benefits to them. Once again, it is win/win. The community benefits, men are employed, local government becomes relevant, and you are accepted as a vital part of the community. And when that happens, people will share what they know with you, and may even be willing to do things for you that you cannot do yourself.

As Napoleon observed: *“A man will fight harder for his interests than for his rights.”*

#### 4. Playgrounds and Parks

Open Space is a rarity even in so-called “advanced societies.” Although rare, Open Space nevertheless is valued by all people, whether they live in large metropolitan areas or small towns. Surely the citizens of your hamlet or town cannot be much different. City parks and playgrounds are those places where families can go on their days off from work or in the evenings. Parks provide relief from the confines of the four walls of one’s own home—probably for many Afghans rather drab and dreary places to begin with.

From your perspective, the most important thing about building new parks and playgrounds or refurbishing old ones is the aspect of community involvement of fair numbers of the local citizens. *This aspect once again affords you the opportunity for positive contact with the people,* for their gainful employment, and for completion of common projects that give the citizens a sense of involvement, purpose and pride in their community.

Method: On one of your regular chats with the mayor and elders of the town, ask about how most of their fellow citizens spend their (probably little) leisure time. You will have already studied the few parks and playgrounds, if any, in your town. If their response is that kids and their parents go to the parks, *or would go to a playground if one existed*, you know you are on target.



Suggest that the mayor head up a joint project to build new parks on suitable ground, or to refurbish existing parks that have become rundown. If the mayor bites, you can tell him that you will help by providing funds to employ local citizens to work on the parks as well as a squad of GI's and maybe a truck or other equipment, if it is really needed. The idea of putting the men to work will be very appealing to the mayor. Bring in a squad of carefully chosen Afghan National Army soldiers to help.

Work gets underway. Be sure to take your time in completing the work. Don't rush, as is the American penchant. Your goal, after all, is not the park per se, *but positive contact with the people*. If at all possible, try to keep the same squad of GI's and ANA soldiers on the project through to completion. Why? Because after a day or two of working alongside one another, friendships will develop. If you send new soldiers each day, it is highly unlikely that any of the Afghans and any of your guys will ever get to know one another, and that defeats the whole purpose.

Perhaps the squad leader should be one of your own trained soldier-propagandists. If so, he can supervise the squad and train them to become topnotch propagandists.

When the playground or park is completed, throw a party there! Send in a cook team to work alongside the mayor's cooks and bottle-washers in staging the event. Have the Afghan cooks show our cooks how to prepare local delicacies; and have our cooks show the Afghan cooks how to fix American style chow. That should be a gas! Whatever is culturally appropriate and necessary for the event should be provided. Invite everyone in town. (And if a large, friendly crowd shows up, you've won the game!)

The Bad Guys? Well, OK. They might try to hit your guys while they are working alongside the local men. But this is tricky for them operationally. IF they were so foolish as to attempt an ambush, they might kill or injure Afghans. This will not endear them to the locals. And on top of that, imagine the press play you can get: "*Insurgents attempt to sabotage work at local park.*" Great stuff—should play well to all audiences as we jointly jeer at the guerrillas.

## 5. Family Day

We've spoken about opportunities for family entertainment. And friendly contact between your soldiers and the local citizens always should be uppermost in your mind. As you also know, your kind treatment of the Afghan children is the key to winning the trust of their parents. Kids are easy to love—and they love you back easily.

Kids around the globe love toys and rides. In this respect, an Afghan child is no different from a kid from Omaha. In wartime, however, circuses are not always available. Besides, circus tickets cost money (and the parents likely are poor.)

Method: You have at your disposal two great assets—soldiers and vehicles (of various types.) If you are on good terms with your Engineer colleagues down the road, or the Aviation guys at the airfield, potentially you have available to you even more assets. You will also need a flat, open

area on the edge of town—perhaps of about four or five acres in size with a good, clear road leading into the area.

Talk to the mayor and elders about the possibility of arranging a “family day” at which kids and their parents could come out to the designated area for a picnic lunch and the opportunity to see some Army equipment. Tell the mayor that you would like for him to co-sponsor the event and address the crowd. (What politician would miss such a golden opportunity?!) Agree upon a date for this event.

Now sit down with your battalion staff and company commanders. (See your Aviation and Engineer friends as well.) Arrange to “borrow” for an afternoon the following: a tank, a deuce and a half, a Humvee, a Combat Engineer Vehicle, perhaps even a chopper. Just one of each; we are not trying to outdo the Paris Air Show. Take your people to the open area so they can begin to visualize your “family day” idea in terms of their own equipment.

The idea would be to allow kids – under your supervision, obviously – to climb up on the vehicles, pretend to “drive” the tank or the truck, or sit in the cockpit of the helo.

Nothing would actually move. We would not want to endanger anyone—the kids or our own people. But it would be a static display for a few hours with the opportunity for little ones (accompanied by parents) to see up “close and personal” the fancy equipment of the Americans—and *more importantly (from your viewpoint) to see the Americans themselves.* THAT is the main payoff: *contact with the people.*

Publicity for the event would involve placements in the local press, leaflets and posters, announcements by the mayor’s office, and so on. The word should be that families come out with picnic lunches to enjoy fellowship with their neighbors and with us. The idea of “rides” for the kids should be mentioned, but carefully avoiding any explicit statement that we would actually *take the kids around* in a tank or chopper.

If you have an erdlator, or can borrow one from your Engineer friends, you can produce sufficient potable water to support the activity. Water should be available in abundance for any and all who wish it. Aside from hard candies for the children, I would avoid any mention of providing food to the crowd; let them bring their own food.

The day of the event, you secure the area with two squads of infantry at the ready, but deployed in such a way that they are not terribly obvious. This is not a time to overawe the visitors; but it IS a time to protect them, your soldier-propagandists, and yourself.

No tickets, no admission fee. Everyone is welcome. Your EM should be prepared to shake many hands, smile, hand out candies, laugh, point out things, help little tots up and down off the bulldozers or Humvees. This is a time to show warmth and friendship.

The Chinese philosopher Mencius observed: “*Kind words do not enter so deeply into men as [does] a reputation for kindness.*”<sup>113</sup> You are building that reputation.

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<sup>113</sup> Mencius, op.cit.

Families may spread out their carpets and eat or drink whenever they please. If water is needed, it is available. (You might also want to have a medic or two standing by.)

Towards the end of the event, say mid-afternoon, His Honor the Mayor takes the stand and delivers a speech to the good citizens. Now it is YOUR turn. Yes, I know you don't speak Pashto or Dari. You don't have to. Just speak from the heart, but at least have an idea of what you want to say. Tell your thoughts beforehand to your interpreter. He will handle the grammar and syntax. Speak to the people.

And if you DO have a few words of the local language, the people will love you for it. It tells them that you cared enough to make the effort – for them.

What matters is that you—a representative of the great United States of America—are actually talking to the local people. The main thing to convey is your sense of respect and regard for these people, and your fervent hope that you and they can work together in friendship and harmony in the future. Short, sweet, to the point.

If you have any musicians, have them play a few tunes. Then, with closing events, signal that it is time for all to depart. You've won the day.

And the Bad Guys? Would they attempt to attack such a gathering? I can't rule it out, though I would have to say it would be risky and foolhardy for them in the extreme. If they were to attempt anything, your infantry screen would be available to disrupt it. And the most important result would be the anger of parents against Bad Guys for trying a foolish stunt that endangers their children.

## 6. Festival!

Everyone needs some entertainment occasionally. Life is otherwise cheerless and dull. In many Third World cultures – Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa – “entertainment” is bound up in festivals, market days, processions, and quasi-religious events. These occasions bring together large segments of the populace in a relaxed setting, a setting often made memorable by music, dance, acrobatics, magic and other types of performances.

Such events can be used to great effect by a propagandist by contributing to the gaiety of the event and using the event as a platform for disseminating messages to the gathered people.

Method: You sit down with the mayor and/or tribal leaders and elders to determine when custom and calendar dictate traditional events such as festivals. Gather details about each event: why and where it is held, public mood during the event, “logistics” and so forth. Pay special attention to cultural nuances: for example, it may be inappropriate for non-believers to have anything to do with a strictly religious event. *But if the event is solely for fun and enjoyment, you can make a valuable contribution at very little cost.*

Let's say there is soon to be a harvest festival featuring music and dancing, maybe with sword-swallowers, magic and the like. Offer to help the local elders or mayor arrange for this festival—Americans have trucks, tents and other useful means at our disposal for this. More, ask permission for a few of us to participate actively in the festival alongside the local talent.

If permission is granted, canvass the entire battalion for guys who can do neat things like juggle well, do acrobatics or gymnastics, perform magic tricks, play the banjo, etc. Have them start practicing/rehearsing immediately. Then, as the day of the festival approaches, fit your guys into the rest of the program *alongside* the locals, not in place of them! The villagers and townspeople will be amused—perhaps even impressed—by the soldiers who have special talents, and who have come to entertain THEM.

Entertainment is a form of inter-cultural communication. None of our soldiers or Marines need be fluent in Pashto; they merely need to know their special art well. Truly, “the medium is the message.”

If it is culturally appropriate to do so, have available bags of hard candies for the little kids. Winning parents' minds, as I've said, begins with winning children's hearts. You might even consider having the Afghan men compete for useful prizes such as food or money: make sure as many men as possible “win” the prizes, while demonstrating their “prowess.”

At a certain point, it is usually time for a tribal elder or the mayor to make a speech. Now comes the payoff for you. IF you have done a good job helping with the festival, praise for your efforts will come easily. And the word of a respected local citizen carries far more weight than hundreds of pounds of Psyop leaflets telling the public how good we are. The public will come away with respect for us, maybe even affection, *for they have now seen us as partners and friends.*

As Thucydides observed: “*We secure our friends, not by accepting favors, but by doing them.*” At the same time, we can have a great good time with the locals. And if the festival comes off well, the mayor or tribal elders will look pretty good, too, and remember you for it.

And the Bad Guys? Well, their only options are: boycott the fun, or try to disrupt it. We win either way—especially if they attempt to disrupt the festival! And we are there to foil them.

## 7. Everyman a Propagandist

One of the great strengths of the Chinese People's Liberation Army is its ability to use its soldiers as propagandists in addition to serving as infantrymen, logisticians, or whatever. With the partial and limited exception of the British Army, none of the major Western armies copies this example.

Yet Clausewitz observed that: “*War is not merely a political act, but also a political instrument, a continuation of political relations, a carrying out of the same by other means.*” American generals regularly pay lip service to Clausewitz—but then devoutly ignore him. The Chinese do not. Wherever their army marches, it seeks out the people and works with them in an effort to

secure their active cooperation. Indeed, peasant support made possible not only the survival of the Eighth Route Army in the 1930s, but provided the peasant power (logistics and intelligence, mainly) for Mao's victories over the Nationalist armies in the late 1940s. The Chinese have never forgotten how important it is to talk to people.

Method: Since the nearest school-trained Psyop Staff Officer is in Bagram, you will have to be the teacher and trainer of your own troops. Start by selecting some of your brightest, cheeriest, most honest and outgoing soldiers for your first "class." It is icing on the cake if these lads already have language and cultural familiarity. But I do not expect that will likely be the case. Nor is it really necessary! At least, to begin with.

You are teaching this class, like von Steuben trained Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge, as a "model unit" to be emulated by others. Indeed, these GI's will become your future trainers. And all the members of your unit – platoon, company, or battalion – will become the students. Many will become skilled practitioners.

The first thing – the most fundamental thing they must be taught – is that no matter how poor or ignorant or dirty an ordinary citizen might appear, *he is nonetheless a human being*. On that basis alone he is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. Purge from the soldiers' vocabulary the usual racial slurs and epithets one hears from 18 year-old GI's in Third World lands! These words drive wedges between our soldiers and their peoples. Those wedges hurt us both.

The second thing your "class" must understand is that *actions speak louder than words*. We will be judged more by what we do than by what we say. It is therefore important that, at all times and in all places, your propagandist-soldiers comport themselves with dignity and the highest degree of professionalism. Your soldiers live in a fishbowl, and every infraction or gaffe will be rapidly transmitted through the public grapevine as: "*Yes, that's how ALL Americans act; that's what we can expect from Americans – those New Russians!*"

Third, get your trained soldier-propagandists out on patrols and MEET THE PEOPLE! Smile at them. Shake hands. Offer hard candies to small kids. Help people when it is obvious they need help. Listen to people—and for heaven's sake, *NEVER laugh at pigeon-English*. Have the soldier-propagandists distribute unit pins, tiny medallions or even shiny new U.S. coins as souvenirs. If on Tuesday they observe a washerwoman whose old tin bucket has about worn through, make sure on Wednesday a new plastic or metal bucket is given to her. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out how to be nice to people.

The thing to keep in mind is that every soldier, whether he knows it or not, each day transmits messages to the local populace simply by his very existence. Whether those messages generate a good feeling with the locals—or bad—is entirely up to each U.S. soldier. And you.

Let me conclude this list of ideas with the following observation from the front lines:

Understanding the basics of your area's culture is a must – without that you could unknowingly offend some key person or group. However, knowing and understanding

the culture only prevents you from doing further harm, it does not help you build rapport. But learning a little of the language (actually, learning as much as possible) will build rapport. Learning and using a little language leads to interaction, which leads to interest, which leads to understanding, which leads to empathy, which finally ends in rapport. In my experience, if a guy had zero interest in learning at least a few words of the language, he was useless as a counterinsurgent (not that he couldn't still pull tower guard, or perform some logistical role.) However, if he had interest in the language and therefore the people, he could simultaneously be a logistician *and* a counterinsurgent. Therefore, if we maximize the interest that every pair of boots on the ground has in language, we stand a good chance of maximizing our effective counterinsurgent strength.<sup>114</sup>

**Now it is Your Turn to Think Up Good Tactical Ideas.**

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<sup>114</sup> Personal note to author sent by Captain David M. Lamborn, Commander "E" Company, 2/506 Infantry, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, then serving in Paktika Province. This observation resulted from his front line experience in Afghanistan in 2008-2009.

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