

8th ANNUAL AOC PACIFIC CONFERENCE

Countering Coercion: The Role of Information Operations



September 10-12, 2019 | Hale Koa Hotel | Honolulu, Hawaii

CALL FOR PAPERS

The theme for the UNCLASSIFIED portion of the **10-12 September 2019 Annual AOC Pacific Conference** co-sponsored with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command is “Countering Coercion: The Role of Information Operations.” This year’s theme examines the Indo-Pacific Information Environment (IE) to understand how coercion and malign influence diminish the effectiveness of deterrence. Following last year’s symposium focus on how Information Operations could support effective deterrence, this year’s theme will examine how comprehensive coercion undermines effective deterrence of adversaries and assurance of allies and partners. Indo-Pacific nations must establish deliberate and forward-looking strategies to counter adversaries’ coercion to stabilize regional security and ensure prosperity. Devising and implementing proactive deterrence strategies as well as nonmilitary approaches to counter coercion are paramount. Strengthening alliance cooperation and security commitment are also integral to addressing adversaries’ coercive activities and demonstrating collective resolve. The symposium will examine how to counter the erosive effects of coercion and malign influence from weakening or negating friendly force inform and influence efforts, preserving confidence in the cohesion of our Alliances and national capabilities to defend sovereignty from multiple attack vectors.

WHY COUNTER-COERCION?

Military Information Operations are both offensive and defensive, and are generally focused on the adversary military decision makers. These IO activities are carried out in a larger information environment where adversaries attempt to influence other countries to acquiesce to their demands, while simultaneously weakening resistance by attacking the social structure through a comprehensive campaign of coercion.¹ According to a study published by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, the United States and her Allies have been ineffective in countering what is described as an over-arching strategy of coercion that features both military and non-military instruments to influence a nation state’s behavior.² Coercion and intimidation support the hybrid forms of warfare practiced by Russia and PRC, and provides the foundational platform for disrupting the cohesion of the West, as both nations seek to exploit Western

¹ Mahnken, Babbage, and Yoshihara, *Countering Comprehensive Coercion: Competitive Strategies Against Authoritarian Political Warfare*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, Washington D.C., 2018.

² *Ibid*, p. 3.

vulnerabilities attacking “the seams of Western institutions” to exploit gaps between governmental organizations and agencies.³

At the Shangri-La conference in Singapore last year, former Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis called out the PRC for its use of military capabilities for the purposes of intimidation and coercion in the Indo-Pacific.⁴ These efforts also extend to the U.S. Homeland, as Vice President Mike Pence explained how the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is using coercion against American businesses, movie studios, universities, think tanks, scholars, journalists, and local, state, and federal officials.”⁵ The stakes of this competition are high, as the New York Times described the U.S. stance articulated by Mattis and Pence as a “portent of [a] ‘New Cold War.’”⁶ ADM Phil Davidson, Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, described PRC coercion in his written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in February this year: “Through fear and economic pressure, Beijing is working to expand its form of communist-socialist ideology in order to bend, break, and replace the existing rules-based international order.”⁷ Speaking to the Center for Strategic and International Studies last November ADM Davidson explained how the Chinese are employing coercion through militarization of the South China Sea and through predatory economic policies, in a manner to achieve military objectives and to dictate policy to other nations while remaining below the level of armed conflict.⁸

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ADM Phil Davidson⁹

Comprehensive coercion is a time-proven approach for our adversaries who are continually conducting, improving, and evolving it their techniques, while keeping them relevant to the current environment. The PRC and Russia use coercion on their own people to strengthen societal cohesion and integrity by suppressing internal dissent, and providing the ruling party the flexibility to go on the offensive against other countries with a “whole of government” effort. Such efforts

³ Ibid, p. 7.

⁴ Thomas Gibbons-Neff, “Mattis Accuses Beijing of ‘Intimidation and Coercion’ in South China Sea, *The New York Times*, June 1, 2018 (Note: this is the online version of the printed article titled “Mattis Blasts China’s Choice to Emphasize Military Might” that appeared on p. A5).

⁵ Michael Pence, Remarks by Vice President Pence on the Administration’s Policy Toward China, the White House, October 4, 2018.

⁶ Jane Perlez, “Pence’s China Speech Seen as Portent of ‘New Cold War’,” *New York Times*, Oct. 5, 2019, p. A7.

⁷ Gabriel Dominguez, “China ‘greatest long-term strategic threat to region and US’, says USINDOPACOM chief,” *Janes Defence Weekly*, Vol. 56, No. 8, p. 6.

⁸ Admiral Philip S. Davidson, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Keynote remarks, “China Power: Up for Debate,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Third Annual China Power Conference, Retrieved from: <https://www.csis.org/events/chinas-power-debate-1>

⁹ ADM Phil Davidson, submitted written testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee 12 February hearing.

are effective against democracies with “freedom of speech” and “individual human rights” traditions. Western laws and traditions create and sustain operating space for adversary comprehensive coercion to take root, essentially creating a new kind of “Gray Zone” in the homelands of the United States and her democratic Allies. The tradecraft elements of Chinese and Russian coercion include bribery, threats of violence, and intimidation in a variety of forms. These efforts are intended to exploit seams and gaps in the Adversary government structures and processes to delay, disrupt, and confound decision-making and policy formulation processes, and thereby maintain the overall initiative.

As the PRC and Russia create domestic problems for foreign governments through comprehensive coercion, military IO in the competition phase faces greater challenges due to the destabilizing and demoralizing effects on societal cohesion and will. Russia and the PRC likely perceive that they are “winning” the battle of ideologies if they can degrade the ideological coherence of the societies of their adversaries, while controlling their own through campaigns of comprehensive coercion against society, both their own and those of adversaries.¹⁰ As Bret Stephens wrote for the *Australia Financial Review*, the authoritarian regimes like the PRC have an advantage in using coercion, intimidation, and subversion, namely a lack of scruples that characterize democratic forms of governance.¹¹

A recently published Government Accountability Office (GAO) report focused on identifying threats of “high national consequence” facing the United States highlights DoD assessment that adversaries around the world are working to “erode democracies, often using democratic institutions, in the Gray Zone of conflict.”¹² This GAO report finds that “DoD has a role in... bolstering its partners against coercion.”¹³ Part of that military role includes Information Operations. However, U.S. and Allied military tend to look past comprehensive coercion as though they were scanning the IE and OE through telescopes reflecting their functional lane or IRC to target adversary decision-makers. While military Information Operations do not directly counter the effects of comprehensive coercion inside the homeland, the IRC practitioners need to be aware of the effects these actions have on their actions in the IE.

Comprehensive coercion is less escalatory than military action, less likely to result in a costly military conflict, and considered “a smart strategic option” for Russia and the PRC as each “exploits Western vulnerabilities.”¹⁴ The Joint Staff’s assessment of the future operating environment predicts “the United States will confront an increasing number of state and non-state actors with the will and capabilities to threaten targets within the homeland and U.S. citizens **with**

¹⁰ Mahnken, Babbage, and Yoshihara, 2018, p. 12.

¹¹ Bret Stephens, “Why the US may lose the war for influence in the Pacific to China, *Australian Financial Review*,

¹² U.S. Government Accountability Office, Report to Congressional Committees, “National Security: Long-Range Emerging Threats Facing the United States as Identified by Federal Agencies, Washington D.C., December, 2018.

¹³ GAO, 2018, p. 5.

¹⁴ Mahnken, Babbage, and Yoshihara, 2018, p. 7.

the ultimate intention to coerce.¹⁵ The same Joint Staff assessment explains that the adversary actions in the “Military Competitive Space” will seek to “influence, deter, and coerce the United States through the credible threat of violence against its homeland and citizens” with provocative deterrence operations such as “snap nuclear exercises, bomber flights, and strategic reconnaissance overflights into U.S. ADIZs.”¹⁶ These activities will seek to disrupt and split our alliances, while degrading the effectiveness of friendly inform and influence activities conducted to deter conflict during the competition phase.¹⁷ Faced with this challenge now, and into the future, it is critical for IO professionals to understand the effects of coercion, and to develop effective counters.

Role of EW/Cyber in Countering Coercion

In addition to the employment of traditional influence information-related capabilities (IRCs), U.S. and Allied forces are witnessing significant advances in the EW and cyber capabilities of potential adversaries (PRC and Russia), who are not restrained from employing these capabilities during the “peacetime” competition phase.¹⁸ BG Mark Odom, head of the Concept Development and Learning Directorate of the Army Capabilities Integration Center (ARCIC) discussing the PRC and Russian threats explained “They don’t make the distinction we do between war and peace, like we do” and so are more comfortable using EW and Cyber during the competition phase.¹⁹ The Army’s Training and Doctrine Command assesses that our potential adversaries will “utilize sophisticated asymmetric or hybrid tactics” that will “leverage combinations of information warfare, cyberspace operations, [and] EW” among other forms of conventional and unconventional warfare to “prepare, infiltrate, isolate, and incite dissent and disruption in nations that are a target of their aggression.”²⁰ Dr. Antulia Echevarria, in his work on Gray Zone conflict, provides an example practical application for EW countering coercion in the case of Ukraine from a Foreign Military Sales perspective, explaining that, “...a high-tech overmatch in electronic warfare (EW) systems and in long-range surveillance assets can tip the balance in favor of Ukraine and achieve some coercive and deterrence goals for the West.”²¹

The Army’s Multi-Domain Operations concept (the theme for 2017 AOC Pacific) stresses the importance of forward presence and deployment of EW and Cyber capabilities in the forward area, in battalion-sized units known as Intelligence, Information, Cyber, Electronic Warfare and Space

¹⁵ Joint Staff, *Joint Operating Environment (JOE) 2035: The Joint Force in a Contested and Disordered World*, the Pentagon, Washington D.C., July 14, 2016, p. 24., emphasis added.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 26.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 28.

¹⁸ U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), *U.S. Army Concept: Multi-Domain Combined Operations at Echelons Above Brigade 2025-2045*, HQs TRADOC, Fort Eustis, VA, December 21, 2018.

¹⁹ Colin Clark, Army Unveils Multi-Domain Concept; Joined at Hip with Air Force, *Breaking Defense*, October 28, 2018. Viewable at <https://breakingdefense.com>

²⁰ Ibid, p. 12.

²¹ Antulia Echevarria II, *Operating in the Gray Zone: An Alternative Paradigm for U.S. Military Strategy*, U.S. Army War College Press, Carlisle Barracks PA, April 2016, p. xiii. Viewable at: <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1318>

(I2CEWS) detachments.²² GEN Robert Brown, Commanding General of U.S. Army Pacific explains that these detachments also carry out Information Operations, and stated these units “must be present in the competition phase. That’s when they can do their best work...and set the state if we do go from competition to crisis.”²³ This new approach provides context for the presentations and discussions at the symposium to examine how EW and Cyber can counter coercion.

CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS

USINDOPACOM J39 and the Association of Old Crows (AOC) are soliciting original unclassified English language presentations and/or papers for the 8th Pacific IO Symposium / USINDOPACOM IO Symposium from subject matter experts in the United States. and Allied and partner militaries (or ministries of defense/security), as well as from academia and industry on the symposium theme. Presentations for the full symposium (September 10th and 11th) must be UNCLASSIFIED, or FOUO releasable to the invited Allied and partner militaries of Australia, Canada, Chile, France, French Polynesia, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.²⁴ Presentations for classified sessions at Camp Smith (September 12th) should be at the SECRET REL/FVEY level, or at higher classification for smaller U.S.-only break-out sessions. Presentations for the CLASSIFIED session are not bound by the theme for the UNCLASSIFIED portion and may cover IRC applications in both competition and war.

Potential Speakers are invited to note the symposium sessions topics and specific areas of interest:

- * Historical and current perspectives of how military IO contribute to counter-coercion.
- * Case studies of PRC coercion and malign influence connected with hybrid warfare
- * Ally and partner perspectives on PRC and Russian coercion and malign influence actions.
- * Opportunities for, and analysis of technical IRCs to compel a reduction in coercive actions, negate effects of adversary attempts at coercion, or increase adversary costs (financial or reputational) of continuing such attacks.

Please contact the Symposium Chair, Arthur Tulak, COL USA, Ret., via e-mail at Arthur.N.Tulak.ctr@pacom.mil if you are interested in speaking or want more information. Proposed presentations should be provided in the form of a brief synopsis, with the proposed title,

²² Mark Pomerleau, The Army Wants to Know How to Deploy Cyber Teams During Peacetime, March 28, 2019. Viewable at www.fifthdomain.com/dod/army

²³ See Sydney J. Freedberg Jr., “Army’s Multi-Domain Unit ‘A Game-Changer’ In Future War,” Breaking Defense, April 1, 2019. Viewable at: <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/04/armys-multi-domain-unit-a-game-changer-in-future-war/>

²⁴ Presentations should be UNCLAS or UNCLASSIFIED FOUO REL TO AUS/CAN/CHL/FRA/GBR/IND/JPN/KOR/MYS/NZL/PHL/ PYF/SGP/TWN

and biographical information on the speaker. Papers that are already completed (or nearly completed drafts) may likewise be submitted. Industry presentations that support the symposium theme may be submitted for either the UNCLASSIFIED or SECRET REL FVEY day. Company or product-focused briefs will not be accepted. The deadline for submitting is close of business Wednesday, July 31, 2019, but earlier is better.