

### U.S. GOVERNMENTAL INFORMATION OPERATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS: A DISCREDITED TOOL OR USER FAILURE? IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE CONFLICT

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Through the prism of operations in Afghanistan, this monograph examines how the U.S. Government's Strategic Communication (SC) and, in particular, the Department of Defense's (DoD) Information Operations (IO) and Military Information Support to Operations (MISO) programs, have contributed to U.S. strategic and foreign policy objectives. It will assess whether current practice is fit for purpose in possible future operations and will argue that the U.S. Government has for many years been encouraged by large contractors to approach communications objectives through techniques heavily influenced by advertising and marketing. These techniques attempt to change hostile **attitudes** to the United States and its foreign policy in the belief that this will subsequently reduce hostile **behavior**. The author will argue that while an attitudinal approach may work in convincing U.S. citizens to buy consumer products, it does not easily translate to the conflict- and crisis-riven societies to which it has been applied. In these cases, the United States would have been far better advised to work directly to mitigate undesired behaviors, and forego attempts to change the underlying attitudes. The author asserts that contrary to the stated intent of senior U.S. officials that the United States must do more with less, in the field of SC, IO, and MISO, it has actually achieved less with more, a point taken up by not just the U.S. media, but so, too, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee.

The author argues that the United States must now actively operationalize the significant body of social and behavioral science research which has now become available, in order to mitigate specific undesired behaviors on the ground: either in advance, as a tool of strategic deterrence in Phase 0 operations or in Phase 1, 2, 3, and 4 operations as a component coupled to conventional military and diplomatic responses. The monograph closes with a brief examination of Chinese and Russian developments in this highly specialized area.

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