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Information-based behavioural influencing
and Western practice

Deception as the Way of Warfare

Armed Forces, Influence Operations and the Cyberspace paradox

Colonel dr. Peter B.M.J. Pijpers and Brigadier-General prof. dr. Paul A.L. Ducheine

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Paper 1

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Authors:

Colonel dr. Peter B.M.J. Pijpers and
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This paper is part of the *Information-based behavioural
influencing and Western practice* paper series.

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This paper is published as part of the project Platform Influencing Human Behaviour, commissioned by the Royal Netherlands Army. The aim of this platform is to build and share knowledge on information-based behavioural influencing in the military context. We bring together international experts and practitioners from both military and academic backgrounds to explore the military-strategic, ethical, legal, and societal issues and boundaries involved. Responsibility for the content rests solely with the authors and does not constitute, nor should it be construed as, an endorsement by the Royal Netherlands Army.

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Paper series: Information-based behavioural influencing and Western practice

The military application of information has a long history in influencing the outcome of war and conflict on the battlefield. Be it by deceiving the opponent, maintaining troop confidence, or shaping public opinion. These tactics are placed under the banner of influencing human behaviour. Behavioural influencing is the act of meaningfully trying to affect the behaviour of an individual by targeting people's knowledge, beliefs and emotions. Within the Dutch armed forces these tactics fall under title of Information Manoeuvre. With the ever-larger and more evasive employment of information-based capabilities to target human cognition, the boundaries of the physical and cognitive battlefield have begun to fade.

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For this paper series scholars, experts and policymakers submitted their papers on the employment of information-related capabilities to influence human behaviour in the military context. From the perspective of an individual European or NATO country's perspective. The Information-based behavioural influencing and Western practice paper series is edited by Arthur Laudrain, Laura Jasper and Michel Rademaker.

Seven papers will be published in this series. These are the following:

- **Deception as the Way of Warfare. Armed Forces, Influence Operations and the Cyberspace paradox.** By Colonel dr. Peter B.M.J. Pijpers, Netherlands Defence Academy and University of Amsterdam, and Brigadier-General prof. dr. Paul A.L. Ducheine, Netherlands Defence Academy and University of Amsterdam
- **Influencing security professionals: are they biased and by which source?** By Johan de Wit, TU Delft & Siemens Smart Infrastructure
- **A discursive analytical approach to understanding target audiences. How NATO can improve its actor-centric analysis.** By Yannick Smits, Research Master Middle Eastern studies Leiden University
- **The concept of Information Manoeuvre: Winning the Battle of Perceptions.** By Judith T. van de Kuijt (TNO), N. Keja (TNO), J.C. Slaager (TNO)
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- **Cognitive Warfare as Part of Society: Never-Ending Battle for Minds.** By Robin Burda, Ph.D. candidate Security and Strategic Studies Masaryk University
- **Behavioural Influence Interventions in the Information Environment: Underlying Mechanisms and Technologies.** By dr. Hans Korteling (TNO), Beatrice Cadet (TNO), Tineke Hof (TNO)

Maneuver warfare is, to put it simply, a kick in the groin, a poke in the eye, a stab in the back.

It is quick, violent for a moment, and unfair. It is decisive, even preemptive, at the expense of protocol and posturing.

Maneuver warfare puts a premium on being sneaky rather than courageous, and it's not at all glorious, because it typically flees from the enemy's strength.¹

1. Introduction

Though fake news, alternative facts and manipulation of information and data appear to be the latest hype, instruments to influence and change human behaviour have been around for ages, also during conflict and war. In effect, deception is the way of warfare.²

Nowadays states can make use of numerous instruments of power to exert influence to change behaviour of opponents. The military instrument is an obvious one, but – with the emergence of cyberspace – the informational instrument of power is of increasing importance. Cyberspace is a catalyst enabling the full use of the information environment, transforming the conveying of information from the cumbersome employment of pamphlets, news articles or radio to a high-speed and all-encompassing tool prompted by the possibilities of Internet and social media.

Similar to outmanoeuvring opponents in the physical realm, state agents can now also 'manoeuvre in the information environment'. These are actions to gain a position of relative advantage by using information to target and change the perception of opponents and their information environment. Information as an instrument to influence the cognition of targeted audiences can be used in tandem with military and other instruments of power as also witnessed in the Russo-Ukraine War.

For the Netherlands, the inception of cyberspace also provides new opportunities to protect and further its national interests. The Netherlands has the capabilities and expressed the intent to use them.³ However, while cyberspace has significantly increased the possibilities to deliberately influence the cognitive dimension of target audiences the Netherlands is - paradoxically enough - reticent in utilising them.

The object of this contribution is therefore to explore how states manoeuvre in the information environment, how they exert influence, and how traditional deceptive and manipulative operations differ from cyber-based influence operations, in order to explore where the reticence to

1 Leonhard, *The Art of the Maneuver: Maneuver-Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle*. p. 61.

2 Sawyer, *Sun Tzu: Art of War*. p. 168.

3 Voo, Hemani, and Cassidy, "National Cyber Power Index 2022."; Netherlands Ministry of Defence, "Defence Vision 2035: Fighting for a Safer Future."