Communications in Conflict

CONTENTS

TOPICS

Science of Coercion

Indigenous Nations

Netwar

Psychological Warfare

Public Health Model

"Fighting for our lives"

Note from the Author

I first encountered the Public Good Project network in the fall of 1994, when Paul de Armond phoned to invite me to dinner. At the time, I was executive director of an environmental litigation consortium, and was up to my neck managing lawsuits against Wise Use.

Paul had been investigating Wise Use operatives throughout Puget Sound, especially their covert money-laundering for electoral purposes, but increasingly their recruiting of violent Christian Patriots to intimidate political opponents of the building and real estate industries. Some of these vigilantes had already threatened my associate Sherilyn Wells (the president of Washington Environmental Council), and Paul wanted to share with me the research he'd gathered in fourteen counties across the state.

> "One thing to read textbook and opinion, another to read a super-view voice that moves back and forth between the plain and the objective bluff looking over it, relating history as it transpires, for the record, a person with a rare scope on the situation.
>
> Jay Taber writes a lot on effective models of community education on tear-em-up issues, the kind that shred a place and people in a way mainstream America tends to be protected from perhaps more by ignorance than any other buffer."
>
> - Juli Kearns, Idyll Opus Press

From that point on, my perspective on politics changed forever; I never again assumed that things were what they seemed, and habitually sought out what was going on behind the scenes. It's a habit I've continued to find useful.

Since that dinner in 1994, I've joined with Paul and other network volunteers -- like Dan Junas, Devin Burghart, Eric Ward and Sheila O'Donnell – in sharing research and analysis, as well as presenting at conferences and workshops sponsored by Public Good. More recently, I've been looking into establishing a national research learning center in San Francisco.

One of the things that struck me at one of those conferences in 2005, was the mentoring structure and process of the Public Good network—something I had personally benefited from, and later sought to continue. Since then, I have experimented with various means and mediums for that purpose, and even described the history of research activism since the early 1960s in an essay titled *Continuity*.

The concepts and frameworks exposed in that essay form the basis of a communication strategy for social conflict—something I elaborate on in my 2008 book *Fighting for Our Lives.*

Our colleague Chip Berlet once said that a real democracy requires the type of informed consent that emerges as many competing ideas struggle for acceptance in the public square. For eighteen years now, Public Good correspondents and operatives have attempted to do something about that—more often than not with good results.

The consensus of the top researchers in the country present at the December 2005 national human rights conference was that a few organizations in the US do original opposition research and have way more than they can handle, but most don't do it at all. Many don't even understand what it is.

All the participants in the researcher's workshop encouraged me to pursue this as a vital yet largely absent component of the human rights movement. They also agreed that a project like this needs to be free of institutional constraints like those extent in religiously-based organizations, in order to focus on recruiting, teaching, and nurturing network development and capacity as opposed to garnering headlines--something Jack Minnis, research director at the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), spoke to four decades ago.

In the spring of 2006, I began to generate interest in establishing a research learning center in San Francisco, in order for experienced political opposition-researchers across the US to pass on their skills and knowledge to another generation. The primary function of the center would be in the field of communication: learning to present ideas and information in the most effective format applicable to a targeted audience. Students of the center would learn by doing projects they select and design within the framework of a proposed and accepted application. Genres of presentation would include exposes, occasional papers, white papers, investigative reports, and intelligence estimates.

Using expert researchers as guest instructors, advisors, and distance-learning adjunct faculty, students would be mentored on how to plan a project, conduct the research, write up the results, and disseminate their analysis in varying formats for different venues. These skills would then be built on in studies, seminars, and exercises designed to examine the uses of communication devices in psychological warfare, in which students would create products based on the information acquired in their initial research project.

An intermediate project was to interview and record these researchers for later editing in anticipation of making the lessons they've learned available online, and this indeed comprised the task culminating in this report. Serious inquiries and offers of assistance
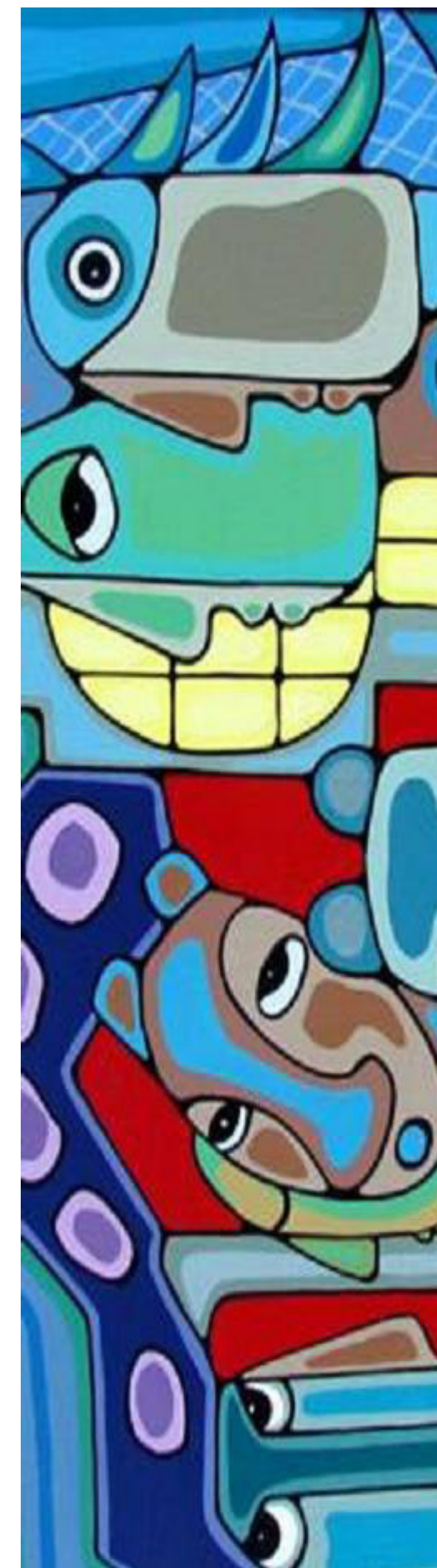
Picture: Echoes of Time Past

Daphne Odjig (Beavon) was born 1919 on the Wikwemikong Reserve, Manitoulin

Table of Contents

with the learning center proposal are most welcome.

Special thanks to Intercontinental Cry's editor and publisher, Ahni Schertow, for putting this publication together. Thanks also to Forrest Palmer, Cory Morningstar and *Wrong Kind of Green* for their excellent work on design.

Communications in Conflict is dedicated to the memory of Paul de Armond, who passed away way too soon. As his partner at Public Good Project for eighteen years, I never tired of our discussions about the public domain. The collaborating and mentoring Paul initiated in 1994 now extends throughout Canada and the US. In fact, in the last few months, we have been busier than ever. Pro-democracy, anti-fraud—a motto that has stood us well.

--Jay Taber, 26 May 2013

Images: From his childhood in Bou-Haroun on the Algerian coast, Valerie DEPADOVA reflects the rhythm of our anatomy, a sense of vitality and strength that illuminates each composition.

Preface

written by John Ahniwanika Schertow

18 years ago, an indigenous movement emerged that would forever change the face and the language of resistance. Upon the instruction of Traditional Maya Leaders, a uniformed militia known as the Zapatista appeared in Southern Mexico, armed, and committed to walking the long road to freedom, peace and autonomy.

It's been a few years since the Zapatista rebels walked away from the international stage; but even in their absence, they have continued to inspire and educate us, whether we find ourselves in Fort Chipewyan or Scotland. Their global support base, meanwhile, continues to stand at the ready.

The Zapatista's influence and their continued impact on global civil society did not happen by chance. They were arguably the first grassroots movement to utilize the full potential of a decentralized communications structure known as "netwar", which is shorthand for networked communications in conflict.

Effective netwar as demonstrated by the Zapatista relies on the strategic use of all available forms of communication including street art, public gestures, signage, text and audio/visual expressions, all of which

relate to an overall theme that is apparent and memorable. Such communications must also stand in sharp contrast to those of opposition in order to clearly distinguish our values from theirs.

Effective mobilization of netwar, on the other hand, is more complex. It relies on time and place, the kinds of resources we have and the challenges in front of us. However, the network itself will be comprised of five interlocking nodes: opposition research, public education, community organizing, and action with the support, if not participation, of allies.

Through their own mobilization, the Zapatista were able to maintain a discourse that would not be replaced by the opposition. At the same time, they strengthened other groups, movements and networks all the while giving us something we could stand with and make our own. The Zapatista aren't the only ones to employ effective netwar. It was used for the Battle in Seattle, the second Palestinian Intifada, the South African revolution and the Occupy movement. It is working now in South America with the Xingu Forever Alive movement and the different Minga's in Ecuador, Colombia and elsewhere.

Contemporaneous with the emergence of the Zapatista, Jay Taber was just beginning to experiment with the tools of netwar that would lead him to intervene numerous times over the past two decades on behalf of networks that were confronting anti-democratic institutions. As an editorial advisor and columnist at Intercontinental Cry, Jay Taber describes the communications devices he and his colleagues used to good effect, showing us a communications strategy that works.

Through his interviews, research and analysis, Jay conveys the lessons of his experience and that of others, from which anyone committed to human rights struggles can benefit. As an introduction to the topic, *Communications in Conflict* is uniquely suited to serve as a touchstone for those who realize the connection between intelligent communications and networked power.

- John Ahniwanika Schertow
  Editor and Publisher
  intercontinentalcry.org
  20 January, 2013

Communications In Conflict - Opposition Research

by Jay Taber

"While diplomacy or negotiation has its place, in the field of zero sum game politics, it is arguably a waste of time. When this negotiation functions as a means of one's opposition gaining intelligence on you and your allies -- as is the case with government institutions that behave as though they're above the law -- diplomacy is self-defeating."

Painting: George Littlechild – Canadian First Nations Artist
http://georgelittlechild.com/

W HEN PAUL DE Armond said in *Research as Organizing Tool* that getting into a negotiating situation with people who have no interest in negotiating with you is inappropriate, his remark was based on considerable experience counseling human rights activists and organizers. While diplomacy or negotiation has its place, in the field of zero sum game politics, it is arguably a waste of time. When this negotiation functions as a means of one's

opposition gaining intelligence on you and your allies -- as is the case with government institutions that behave as though they're above the law -- diplomacy is self-defeating.

A S FORMER RESEARCH director at *Public Good Project* – a privately-funded network of researchers, analysts and activists engaged in defending democracy – Paul has seen more than his share of concerned citizens and good government groups blind-sided by an

opposition playing by a different set of rules. Part of this he puts down to the fact that the models they bring to these situations don't work. Often, he notes, their response to a problem is in a complete vacuum of information.

W HILE IT'S REAL easy to get a lot of people involved in a community response, he says, it'll usually be ineffective because they don't know what they're up against. "Opposition research," he says,

"doesn't even occur to many organizations. They know nothing but their own ideological stance and these fantasies they bill to the opposition. They start reacting to that fantasy and the opposition just runs right over them."

PART OF THE problem, according to Paul, is mainstream media. Reporters interview somebody who doesn't have a clue, basically saying things they read in some newspaper article quoting some other clueless person who didn't know what they were talking about. "But because it showed up in the newspaper, it ends up very circular and it's extremely hard to break." Requests for background on political opponents or community disrupters, he notes, are extremely rare. "If people have figured out that's what's necessary, it's not all that hard to dig up. The thing is that they don't figure out that's necessary.

IN 1996, PAUL developed a research training course for a university class to identify the locus of anti-social/anti-democratic activity that advocated depriving people of their civil liberties or civil rights, or stripping them of the protection of the law, or making them 2nd class citizens. The students, using their three textbooks: The Investigative Reporter's Handbook, The Opposition Research Handbook, and Get the Facts on Anyone, then did full background checks on the anti-democratic activists.

AS PAUL POINTS out, though, most advocacy groups are strictly oriented to public policy, not the process. They do not do opposition research on anti-democratic groups opposing their policy through intimidation, harassment, and violence, because they do not engage in opposition activity. They are engaged in the political diplomatic model. So in terms of the training he does, it's been personal, not institutional. "Individual reporters, individual members of non-profits, once converted

from the ideological projection model," he says, "where you imagine what the opposition is and respond to your imagination, actually get into research, analysis, and intervention"--what Paul calls The Public Health Model.

THE FOUR BASIC models typically used to combat anti-democratic groups are law enforcement, political diplomacy, military intervention, and pressure group. None of them work for this type of conflict. In Paul's mind, pressure groups tend to make things worse. However, when people start acting from the public health model -- which is to look at the causative mechanism, how the behavior is transmitted, and what sort of interventions can either prevent or modify it -- they see how effective it is. Ideologically driven intervention, the diplomatic model, tries to alter people's beliefs in hope they'll modify their behavior.

PAUL ACKNOWLEDGES THAT some of the regional human rights organizations have done very good educational work, but that their training has been in community organizing along the lines of pressure group tactics, as opposed to intervention. The beneficiary organizations, he says, often end up functioning as quasi-governmental agencies, or bureaucratic grant machines. Observing what happens when hate mongers arrived, he says these groups would showboat, engaging in moral theatrics, but the instant the provocateurs leave, "The real hell will break loose and all those people will melt away like snow in a heavy rain.."

DEVIN BURGHART, VICE president of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, played a key role in defeating the nationwide anti-immigrant campaign in 2005-2006 in the US. In that capacity, he organized a monitoring and reporting system in order to prioritize resource mobilization based on information generated

from community-based researchers and organizers around the country.

NOTING THAT IT'S always a challenge for conventional activists and moral authorities to get beyond stereotypes, Devin says, "The rewards clearly outweigh any kind of work that it might take to do that. We found people very responsive to coming together, particularly dealing with these issues, to work towards common goals." In creating moral barriers to hate-mongering,", he says, "often, it's finding leaders who are initially willing to speak out, and then having those leaders speak in a rhetoric which resonates with the particular constituency...have them develop the rhetorical strategies."

THE TRAINING BURGHART has done involves a mixture of opposition research, propaganda analysis, and investigative techniques, depending on the needs and the interests of the people involved and what they're facing in their community, as well as putting it into a framework of how to look at the situation. The training, he says, helped establish a regional network of organizations that keep an ear to the ground doing local research, while continuing to develop themselves organizationally. This base of people, trained in research, he notes, allowed him to look around and strategically target new problem areas, using locally generated incident reports.

DEVIN ALSO NOTES that having a network in place, and having the research to support claims, has been an essential component of building trust and credibility as a media source. "It's allowed people in local communities to establish a relationship with the media and to help frame the story in a way in which they see as more appropriate than the other side." Burghart claims research is essential for several reasons. "By knowing your opposition, you not only

whom it's going to be impossible to work with, but also which constituencies those groups are out there trying to recruit. By figuring out those two things, you can employ a strategy...to isolate the source of the hatred...inoculate those constituencies which are potentially vulnerable...and help them understand the issue before the other side does."

CONSEQUENTLY," SAYS DEVIN, "you can do the education and organizing work you need to do for the long term to move beyond that problem." "Additionally," he notes, "It also can show you where you're weak and allow you to do better advocacy. Because you'll know in advance the arguments that the other side is making, you can refute them effectively. It can also help you plot a better course in dealing with conflict when you know what the opposition is up to." His 2005 report Shell Games illustrates his point.

AS BURGHART OBSERVES, "People often think that research is something that gets handed to them in the intelligence report, or something that they can find on the Internet for free, which is simply not the case. You have to have an organizational understanding that it's important to conduct research and to respect its findings. It's not something someone hands you or you pick up in the local newspaper--it takes a lot more than that to do it effectively."

ADDITIONALLY," HE SAYS, "they need to do a better job of expanding their overall internal institutional memory, to keep the information they bring in through research and analysis, and disburse it throughout the organization, developing the organizational respect required to internalize it enough to keep the information flowing beyond any single person's involvement. "

LASTLY," HE SAYS, "they need to develop some financial and organizational stability, so that groups aren't just popping up on an ad hoc basis when an incident arises." "By being engaged with regional and national organizations," Burghart says, "you can break down that barrier of isolation and share information across borders and expand your scope, and also make sure you're not the only ones who have that information." "Because sometimes," he says, "you'll find in one particular community, one little bit of information may not be important to you, but it may mean a lot to someone else." As he observes, "It also helps, conversely, to break down the kind of myopic experience of when people who tend to do research can sometimes think that their local community is representative of the entire world. It helps to maintain perspective."

TARSO LUIS RAMOS, executive director at Political Research Associates, says, "A very mistaken notion of power, but a prevalent one, is that knowledge is power; that correct information is enough to discredit illegitimate arguments or organizing efforts. Our experience has been that's simply not true."

BELIEVING THAT IT'S critical for community-based organizations to develop some level of research capacity, Tarso says they need access to training and then follow up support for existing staff or leadership. "I think", says Tarso, "a large challenge is working with organizations to determine how much of their resources should be allocated to research, and arriving at a specific plan they stick to in relation to that. I think most organizations will see the value of research, if they don't already, in a relatively short period of time."

THE OTHER PROBLEM organizations encounter, says Ramos, is in making the research more strategic, by which he means linking it to strategy development, defining research needs in relation to that strategy.

IN TERMS OF THE most practical development of community based research capacity, Tarso says that organizations focused in some other arena -- such as electoral and legislative research -- may not see grass roots organizing as an area for monitoring, noting, "People who are in some way organic researchers...the kinds of people who keep newspaper clippings, who maybe attend meetings, who try to dig up information on what's going on in their community that's If bothering them... exist in many communities and are incredible resources....It's been important to me as a researcher to identify people like that."

IN CLOSING, TARSO proposes that in order to build collective power, it's necessary for individuals of this sort to become connected as leaders within organizations, even if the primary function of those individuals continues to be research, as opposed to trying to get them to do organizing. As he observes, "Often times researchers and organizers have really different skills sets and you shouldn't try to do both things. But I think making those connections is vital."

FOR CHUCK TANNER of Borderlands Research and Education, one point that stands out is the ability of research to highlight the constituencies our opponents are targeting for recruitment and the messages and methods they are using. This, he says, allows us to counter-organize by getting good information about the anti-democratic right into those communities, decoding bigoted messaging and offering alternatives. This, Tanner observes, goes hand in hand with opposition research providing insights into where and how anti-democratic forces are trying

to leverage institutional change. Knowing how they are attempting to do this, and the constituencies and institutional actors they are targeting, he notes, allows us to craft a better, more effective strategy. "I think," Chuck remarks, "that all of these elements speak to what Paul de Armond described as an emphasis on process over just policy."

" WHILE INTEGRATING RESEARCH into the organizational cultures and strategic planning of organizations is important to advancing justice," says Tanner, "in the end, these struggles are not going to be won by research. They are," he notes, "won by feet on the ground." More importantly, he argues, they will be won by building a political movement, or set of movements, that can bend the "arc of the moral universe" toward "justice," as Dr. King said. "That being said, those feet have to be attached to eyes and ears and minds cognizant of the institutional, cultural and strategic environment in which they are operating. If they are not, they won't be as effective and they may miss a rebellion from the right that pushes institutions in a worse direction and makes it even more difficult achieve our goals."

G OOD OPPOSITION RESEARCH, says Tanner, can also help us better imagine and construct the broad-based coalition for tribal self-determination and social, environmental and economic justice that we will need to change society and liberate our communities. As he warns, "We are up against a combination of entrenched economic power, institutional myopia and various forms of cultural misinformation and bigotry. We are up against organized movements that seek to mobilize this political landscape to ensure that society maintains privilege based, alternatively, on race, religion, gender, and narrow conceptions of property and national identity, depending on which anti-democratic movement you are confronting at a given time."

B ECAUSE THESE MOVEMENTS have narrow versions of "us," their own narrow identities, Tanner observes, they pose a threat to a broad range of "others." The communities that we care about, he points out, are likely to fall into that "other" at some point, as are other communities we know less about. Opposition research can help us understand this. "When a community is under attack from a campaign by organized bigots," he says, "it can be isolating. Good opposition research can contribute to breaking down this isolation and building bridges between communities - bridges based on both the common foe communities may face and the common ground they may share."

" IN A RECENT study of anti-Indianism in the Skagit County, Washington GOP," Chuck notes, "we found that the same people who sought to end tribal sovereignty rejected the idea that Muslims could be American. The same people who opposed tribal jurisdiction on-reservations opposed the civil rights of homosexuals and immigrants and promoted "state's rights" policies that threaten tribal and civil rights. And the same groups that sought to impose non-Indian voting in tribal government elections opposed environmental protections and labor rights."

J UST KNOWING THIS information doesn't magically make alliances form, he concedes, but it can get you a foot in the door. Very real differences have existed between the communities under attack from the right--between tribes and both organized labor and environmental activists. And bigotry, Chuck asserts, exists in all communities. However, having good research about the common threat we all face can provide a foot in the door to building bridges and broadening our own "we".

Painting: Mundaring Arts Centre Exhibitions http://mundaringartscentre.com/

I N TRAININGS TANNER has done for the United Auto Workers Civil Rights Department, people were very concerned about the threat that organized white supremacists posed to civil rights. Through research, Chuck was able to show that these same groups that work with white supremacists seek to terminate tribal governments and abrogate treaties. "For some of the folks at these trainings," he says, "it was their first introduction to these fundamental tribal rights."

A S TANNER STRESSED, opposition research can get you a foot in the door to building bridges. It can help potential allies divided by their own sense of isolation begin to rethink who "we" are--not a uniform we, but we of autonomous communities linked by a common threat, and, in the end, many common concerns. It can be a foot in the door to educating diverse communities targeted by the right about the national rights of American Indian tribes, something that is misunderstood even by many good proponents of civil rights and environmental protection.

A S TANNER SAYS, "None of the many communities targeted by right-wing policies and the unjust hierarchies they wish to impose on society are large enough or rich enough to stand on their own. We can only reshape this world by coming together. While opposition research is not sufficient to build an effective, broad-scale movement, it is a necessary component."

I N HIS TRAVELS around the country, long time Civil Rights researcher Chip Berlet says he has found a lot of local people are good with research skills. "What we need to do", he says, "is just get folks understanding that you need to pass on those skills." Illustrating how those skills remain constant even as technology has changed over the last twenty years, Rudolph C. Ryser's *Anti-Indian Movement on the Tribal*

Frontier, Paul de Armond's *Wise Use in Northern Puget Sound*, and Charles Tanner Jr. and Leah Henry-Tanner's *Trampling on the Treaties* serve as shining examples of the craft. In their report *Offsetting Resistance*, Macdonald Stainsby and Dru Oja Jay show the importance of following the money.

T HE VIEW THAT hate and violence, based on ignorance and fear, must be treated as a social disease requiring research, education, and organizing strategies of prevention, as well as intervention where outbreaks occur, reinforces these researchers insistence on the need for functioning networks, that link local concerned citizens with regional and national information and training resources. The difficulties pointed out in working with and relying on government agencies, law enforcement, and media -- to build tolerance and justice, or to constrain intolerant behavior -- place all the more burden on the groups and individuals who commit themselves to this very special purpose.

T HE NEED TO develop respect for research -- in order to act and organize around information, rather than ideology -- the need to train others in the methods, and the need to develop institutional memory within the groups organized for this purpose, is both daunting and exhilarating. The only thing worse than facing a formidable challenge, though, is living with despair over not knowing what to do.

Painting: Dennis Nona | Kala Lagaw Ya people | Thabara
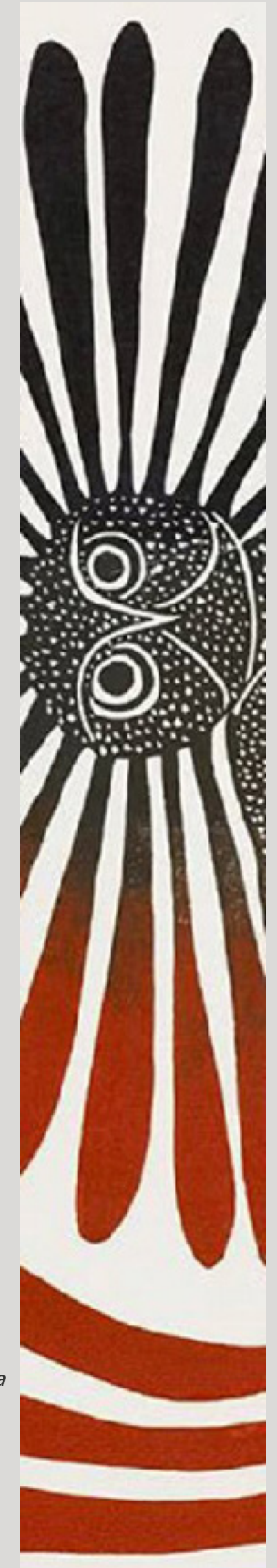
Painting: Kenojuak Ashevak (1927-2013) | Born in an igloo in an Inuit camp on Baffin Island in Canada's far north, Kenojuak Ashevak would become a prolific multidisciplinary artist.

Communications In Conflict- Intelligence Information Ideas

by Jay Taber

"One area often overlooked by novices to psychological warfare, however, is the use of messages crafted and delivered for the purpose of preventing the enemy from effectively mobilizing audiences potentially supportive of its views, goals, and objectives."

Artist: Canadian artist Roy Henry Vickers

Photograph: Orin Langelle | Elder Indigenous woman takes part in a march for world peace in San Cristobal, Chiapas, Mexico 2003. Bishop Felipe Arizmendi led the march, days before the launch of the second US war on Iraq. LANGELLE PHOTOGRAPHY uses the power of photojournalism to expose social and ecological injustice.

A S STAN GOFF wrote in his 1 February 2007 essay *On strategy, tactics and intelligence*, "Intelligence is information analyzed for its value to develop plans for action. Most of it, even in the world of government intelligence, doesn't come from breaking codes or running agents — contrary to the media myths — but from information that is readily available to everyone."

"Basically," he says, "that means if we do intelligence gathering and analysis right, then ours is going to be as good as theirs… maybe better, since we don't have bureaucratic ambitions and political agendas distorting ours as much."

Goff goes on to say that, "Information has to be gathered, which means there has to be some criteria for what information to seek. The base criterion is always the goal of planned actions. Then the information has to be subjected to some kind of analytical process; and that requires a *method*.

Operational goals direct the intelligence effort; and intelligence (analyzed information) provides the basis for plans."

As he observes, intelligence begins by using the desired end-state goal as the lodestar, then doing an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, and dispositions of "friendly forces" and "enemy forces," and relating them to their surrounding conditions.

As Goff summarizes, "Strategy refers to the overall goal, the "desired end state" after

all is said and done. The best that can be hoped for in a constantly changing reality, he notes, is a strategic direction. A strategy is a compass, not a route."

Midway between strategy and tactics, he observes, is "the operational dimension," i.e., campaigns. A campaign is a series of actions designed to achieve some intermediate objective that is required to get to the final goal. *This is not linear*. A + B + C does not equal D. Campaigns are not routes, but things between us and our strategic goal.

Tactics are the techniques we use to win individual battles. They must be highly contingent, that is suited to a particular place and time and situation. Tactics are the legs of the routes we select to get from here to there.

Intelligence is the map. It is not the real ground we have to go over, but as close as possible to a conceptual representation of the ground so that we can check ourselves along the way. Intelligence looks at the relative strengths and weaknesses of the friendly and enemy forces; and good operations design actions that match our strengths to their weaknesses.

Concluding, Goff notes that, "there is a dimension of intelligence that corresponds to every level of conflict: strategic, operational, and tactical. Tactics are *techniques* designed to win *battles*. Tactical agility is the ability to see changes in the situation, understand the implications of those changes, then adjust and exploit those changes with decisive action more quickly than their opponents."

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Psychological warfare, according to Paul Linebarger of the School of Advanced International Studies, is a continuous process not controlled by laws, usages, and customs of war — covert, often disguised as the voice of institutions and media

— a non-violent persuasion waged before, during, and after war.

As Linebarger wrote in the 1940s, "In states anxious to promote a fixed mentality, the entire population lives under conditions approximating the psychological side of war." Coordinated propaganda machines, he observed, include psywar, public relations, general news, and public education. "Psywar," he warned, "has in private media facilities, in an open society, a constantly refreshed source of new material."

In doing graduate research for the thesis included in my book *War of Ideas*, I developed a curricular proposal, *Communication for Change*, which incorporated the study of psychological warfare as a key component of effective social activism. The more I observe discussion online about social conflict now taking place on the Internet and public airwaves, the more I realize how widespread and entrenched the misunderstanding of the nature of this conflict is, and in turn how important it is for those engaged in this war of ideas to acquaint themselves with at least the basic principles if not tactics of psywar. For those unable to access the classic texts on this topic -- *Psychological Warfare* by Paul Linebarger, and *Science of Coercion* by Christopher Simpson -- I'll try to recall them here.

For starters, there are two things to always keep in mind: the target audience, and the purpose of the message. In a theater of war -- physical or psychological -- there are combatants and non-combatants and at least two sides, as well as many interests. In communicating social transformation, psywar will be employed at different times and in different ways depending on the audience targeted and what the message transmitter is attempting to affect.

In recruiting the uninvolved or uncommitted, the message might convey an urgent threat, a righteous cause, a juicy opportunity, or a chance for revenge. In retaining the

involved, a message would likely include an appeal to pride and expectations of victory. In undermining the resolve of the enemy, messages generally try to create doubts about all the above.

One area often overlooked by novices to psychological warfare, however, is the use of messages crafted and delivered for the purpose of preventing the enemy from effectively mobilizing audiences potentially supportive of its views, goals, and objectives. These strategically-developed messages -- sometimes overt, sometimes covert -- are those most-commonly associated with gray and black ops, white being forthright, gray misleading, and black counterfeit.

Understanding these techniques of mass communication -- deployed in abundance in politics and advertising today -- is essential for those who care about where the world is heading, even if in the end they decide to avoid the field of social conflict themselves. Once educated on the topic, they can at least refrain from unwittingly undermining those with whom they agree.

The first principle of psywar is never repeat the talking points of your enemy. The second principle is to deny them a platform to misinform.

A current example of the *Principles of Psywar* is the narrative of white persecution deployed by the Tea Party movement in the United States in order to intimidate non-white voters and elections officials. As documented in *Abridging the Vote*, a special report by Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind, fascist populism -- exemplified by the Tea Party/Christian Patriot milieu – is bolstered by reference to a theme that resonates with fundamentalist Christianity that has deep roots in Southern racism.

WORKING WITH WORDS

The four modes of social organization — tribes, institutions, markets, and networks

— all intentionally utilize words to communicate their unique perspectives and preferences. Words are chosen for their effect in creation stories, in mythologies, in advertising, and in propaganda.

Words themselves are invented for a purpose. They serve as tools of social organization, as weapons of war, as means of manipulation, and as medicine for the maligned.

Depending on how they are used, words can cause horrendous harm or great good. Meanings can be distorted or clarified.

Working with words can gain one respect, renown, and reward, but it can also generate resentment. Not all messages are appreciated.

Learning to use words effectively requires an understanding of the principles of communication, especially in what is termed netwar, which assumes that all communication in all its dimensions is contested, no matter the stated intent of the participants. Words are meant to achieve, and as propositions in the arena of human consciousness, they will be confronted; as such, working with words is serious business.

As an editor, blogger and correspondent, I frequently come across brilliant scholars and committed activists struggling to communicate vital stories to institutional leaders, philanthropic donors, and media gatekeepers. As a communications advisor, I am amazed at how little attention is paid by these devoted humanitarians to the principles of this science.

As it is, many writers – while often informative – are sometimes difficult to follow, as they offer bits of topics here and there. Part of effective storytelling is to be interesting, but to be persuasive, that story needs to be sufficiently coherent. With emerging authors, it is best for them to learn to think about structure and narrative coherence by

doing that work themselves, but for those lacking a background in journalism or literature, manuals on such topics as briefings are worth looking at.

NETWAR

In his 1996 treatise *Tribes, Institutions, Markets, Networks*, RAND analyst David Ronfeldt proposed a framework about societal evolution that viewed the conflict between these primary forms of social organization as something akin to growing pains. Each form, having come about to accommodate human needs or desires, had to adapt to the others as they themselves evolved as a result of both conflictual and cooperative dynamics.

In 2001, Ronfeldt and his associate John Arquilla extended this proposition in a paper titled Networks and Netwars and the Fight for the Future, which compared and contrasted the maneuverability of these varied forms in modern civil society conflicts. Involving the use of psychological warfare, this maneuverability is enhanced by improvements in communications technology as well as new sociological doctrine, strategy and tactics. *Netwar in the Emerald City*, by their colleague Paul de Armond, illustrated their theories relative to the 1999 WTO Ministerial fracas, commonly known as *The Battle in Seattle*.

At the 2008 UN climate talks in Poznan, the four social forces delineated by Ronfeldt met on the field of ideological battle -- in what might be called a preliminary infosphere skirmish -- as prelude to the December 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. Having been invited to participate in the talks to offer their unique perspective, *Indigenous Delegates Excluded* from participating once they arrived, were only able to observe the institutional negotiations (based on market assumptions) over their objection.

Loosely allied with the Indigenous

Resistance to Globalization, whose delegates descended on Poznan, is the network of non-indigenous activists involved in environmental restoration, human rights advocacy, and pro-democracy organizing. Considered distinct issues by the institutions meeting in Poland, the connectivity of these values is consolidated in the tribal worldview under the law of generosity, often noted as comprising conservation, cooperation, and reciprocity.

As I noted in my post *Unfair Dealing* at *Intercontinental Cry* news magazine, duplicity isn't limited to the bureaucracy at the UN. In fact, you might say the US Government pioneered the practice.

In the opening section of the Albion Monitor article *Black Flag Over Seattle*, Mr. de Armond remarked that plans of battle evaporate with the first foray onto the battlefield. Given that the opposing forces mustering around the climate change arena hold diametrically opposed views of how nature, life and humanity should be conducted, it seems inevitable that without a change of heart by institutional and market actors in this supreme human drama, the outcome of the presently myopic negotiations is doomed from the outset. What the more visionary, wholistic non-participants can achieve depends on their ability to outmaneuver their less-evolved opponents.

When the Zapatista uprising appeared in world media in January 1994, it wasn't out of the blue; Mayan communities had been holding assemblies to discuss the ramifications of armed defense of their democratic way of life for well over a decade.

What was new was the alliance with non-indigenous Mexican revolutionaries, born in the national conflict of 1968 -- where 300 students were murdered at Tlatelolco by the army in Mexico City ten days before the Olympic Games -- and a working relationship with international NGOs and civil society human rights networks. Common

to them all were principles of participatory democracy, but the driving force was the social base of indigenous communities and their authentic culture.

Today, with #Occupy looking to find its feet in fighting globalization and oligarchy -- the same foes as confronted by the Zapatistas -- NGOs and civil society networks are again essential to the liberation movement. While liberation news outlets and network communications are critical infrastructure for liberation, a social base is equally important.

As Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos remarked during the national campaign for democracy in Mexico, "We are coming after the rich of this country, we are going to kick them out, and if they have committed crimes, well, we will put them in prison… because this is the time that has come. We say that coexisting with them is not possible, because their existence means our disappearance."

For readers looking to better understand the relationships between indigenous peoples, revolution and democracy, my friend David Ronfeldt's book The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico might be both interesting and informative.

As John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt observed in *The Advent of Netwar*:

"In the years ahead, the possibility should not be overlooked that a major new global peace and disarmament movement may eventually arise from a grand alliance among diverse NGOs and other civil-society actors who are attuned to the doctrinal elements of netwar. They will increasingly have the organizational, technological, and social infrastructures to fight against recalcitrant governments, as well as to operate in tandem with governments and supranational bodies that may favor the movement."

INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY

In *The Great Circle of Justice*, Barbara Gray and Pat Lauderdale refer to narratives and stories as, "basic life forces needed to establish and to preserve communities and develop a common culture of shared understandings, and deeper, more vital ethics… how humans are to live with each other…a blueprint that provides the communities' structures (e.g., political and spiritual forms of governance, kinship relations, and societies that have specific duties and responsibilities in maintaining justice within the community)."

Through participation in narrative events, they claim, those who feel as if they are alone become connected.

Gray and Lauderdale's paper, oriented toward American Indians, applies as well to the rest of us; the stories we tell help model the type of society we want to live in, who we are, and where we came from. And it is this role of storytelling, the use of history, the preservation of memory, that enables us to recognize patterns of conduct and rhetoric our communities have witnessed previously, in order for us to comprehend new threats and dangers. Replenished, renewed, and repeated, these stories build a cohesive narrative of our collective understanding— *our institutional memory*.

Memories, however, do not reside in books or aging minds alone; indeed, they require the regular nourishment of ceremonies and conferences and public gatherings where they are spoken and heard and embellished with the perspective of time and maturation and contextual change. And by making the linkages between the past and the present, our stories allow us to create the narrative of a future that embraces both.

In his occasional paper and video *Tribes Institutions Markets Networks*, David Ronfeldt examines the framework of societal evolution, contending that, "Civil society

appears to be the realm most affected by the rise of the network form, auguring a vast rebalancing of relations among state, market, and civil-society actors around the world…a new center of meaningful citizenship." These networks—emerging in response to broad societal conditions—embody, he notes, "a distinct cluster of values, norms, and codes of behavior" that, combined with other forms, "allows a society to function well and evolve to a higher level."

Absent a widespread tribal support system or reliable public or private institutions for the regular exercise of our new narratives incorporating our vital stories, values, and norms, it is the network form we must now rely on as "curator" of these tales. Organizations within a civil-society network, more precisely, the individuals who retain these collective memories, are then crucial to keeping them alive. The communication of our stories will then determine who we will become.

In their ten-year update on Noopolitik, David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla rephrased in useful ways their earlier analysis of the evolution of planetary consciousness. Their emphasis on the role of information structuring that illuminates goals, values and practices related to identity, meaning and purpose of civil society, points to the need for more analysts and strategists in value-laden conflicts. Yet even with the exponential increase in unmediated communication, they note that, "It may be a while before propitious conditions re–emerge."

Scholars of social change and asymmetrical conflict will likely find the attached bibliography enlightening.

COMMUNICATIONS AND POWER

In *Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society*, Manuel Castells noted,

"The growing intersection between horizontal and vertical networks of communication does not mean that the mainstream media are taking over the new, autonomous forms of content generation and distribution. It means that there is a contradictory process that gives birth to a new media reality whose contours and effects will ultimately be decided through a series of political and business power struggles [that pit] networks of meaning in opposition to networks of instrumentality."

In his seminal study *Science of Coercion*, Christopher Simpson observed that communication might be understood as both the conduit for and the actual substance of human culture and consciousness. As Simpson noted, psychological warfare is the application of mass communication to modern social conflict.

In the U.S. Army War College manual on psychological warfare, the stated objective is to destroy the will and ability of the enemy to fight by depriving them of the support of allies and neutrals. Some of the methods used in the manual are sowing dissension, distrust, fear and hopelessness.

In the decades since these treatises were first published, a new form of psywar has emerged in the form of false hope. With unlimited funding and organizational support from foundations like Ford, Rockefeller, Gates and Soros, U.S. Government propaganda now has a vast new army of non-profits that, along with corporate media and academia, serve as both a third wing of mass consciousness and a fifth column for destabilization campaigns worldwide.

As Cory Morningstar captures *The Simulacrum* in her multi-part series at *Wrong Kind of Green* on the non-profit industrial complex, domesticating the populace is a fait accompli, and the only question remaining is what will happen if and when capitalist activism is seen for what

it is. By following the money from aristocratic derivatives to embodiments of false hope like Avaaz, MoveOn, and Change, Morningstar steps through the looking glass to expose how NGOs have become a key tool of global dominance using social media as a means of social manipulation.

When the smoke generated by phony progressives clears, all that is left is an industrial wasteland of false hope and real threats. When the betrayals of NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are known, we can finally begin to exercise our responsibilities. Until then, programs like Democracy Now remain little more than adult versions of Sesame Street for the toy Che brigades.

In his book *Peddlers of Crisis*, Jerry Sanders examined the systematic integration of perception management during the Cold War. Noting how synchronized government propaganda, mainstream media and authoritative academia was orchestrated to support endless war, Sanders remarked that to keep the money flowing, they had to make everyone believe the Russians were ten feet tall. In the post Cold War, the peddlers of crisis are now online social entrepreneurs, working in tandem with the traditional warmongers on the task of manipulating public sentiment in support of the new American empire.

In her expose of Avaaz -- the creme de la creme of neoliberal activism -- Cory Morningstar details the consumer branding by the imperial network of financiers like Soros Open Society. Profiling the entrepreneurs in the pro-war, "champagne circuit of e-advocacy", Morningstar illustrates the premise that in order to be pro-democracy one has to be anti-fraud. If fraudulent polls and cooked up member lists constitute the justification for the elite's imperial project, then right-clicking for war means the revolution has finally been funded. The only problem is that the project has consequences--like 9/11.

Blowback from people pissed off at American supported tyrants or American promoted invasions of their countries may not concern the Ivory Tower activists, but for those of us going without food, shelter or medicine while the U.S. Treasury bails out banks and finances aggression worldwide, perpetual warfare at the expense of general welfare is a real problem--not a ten foot tall myth.

RESEARCH AS ORGANIZING TOOL

In *The Road to Athena's Camp*, Paul de Armond wrote,

The information revolution is transforming the nature of conflict across the spectrum. In social conflicts, the Internet and other media are greatly empowering individuals and small groups to influence the behavior of states. Preparing for conflict in such a world will require shifting to new forms of organization.

Netwar refers to an emerging mode of social conflict in which the protagonists use network forms of organization and related doctrines, strategies, and sometimes technologies. Netwar players are likely to consist of dispersed organizations, small groups, and individuals who communicate, coordinate, and conduct their campaigns in a consultative and collaborative manner without a central command.

Research provides the facts and builds a knowledge base. That knowledge is filtered through analysis to determine strategy. Operational research guides the tactics used to accomplish the strategy. In netwar, multiple groups adopt their understanding of the situation to develop the strategy and tactics most favorable to their situation.

As Paul emphasizes, "Research separates facts from misinformation by finding the evidence that enables judgment. Information is the facts that matter; knowledge is information in a framework. Research and analysis

is using what you do know to find out what you don't."

As he concludes,

"Netwar is information conflict where information changes behavior. The netwar framework is a way of viewing movement dynamics in terms of information and social networks. Movements are all about information and conflict. Netwars are fought and won by comprehensive understanding"

STORYTELLING

In *Storytelling and Globalization,* Michelle Shumate, J. Alison Bryant and Peter R. Monge note that storytelling is viewed to be of special significance to network organizations because it is the means by which they encourage members to identify with and act on behalf of the network. When network organizations compete in storytelling with other organizations, they engage in narrative netwar.

In traditional wars, they observe, if one disables the leadership or normal channels of communication, the war is won. In netwar, however, the network adjusts quickly to the environment, continuing on the offensive on some fronts, and establishing alternative channels of communication.

Public relations researchers and professionals, they say, argue that a single spokesperson telling the organizational story in times of crisis is essential to an effective media strategy. The reason for only allowing a single spokesperson to speak on behalf of the organization, they say, is to create a single, cohesive, and favorable story of organizational actions. But in networks, story performances are part of an organization-wide information-processing experience to formulate rational collective accounts to serve as precedent for individual assumption, decision and action.

Stories told by organizational actors,

though, are reinterpreted by journalists who become essential storytellers because they can be instrumental in gaining public support. Maneuvering media into a position where the network narrative cannot be ignored is part of netwar communication strategy. In these stories that determine the future of humanity, we are literally *Fighting for Our Lives.*

Photograph: Indigenous Peoples Alto Xingu – Stop Pushing Us For REDD
Rebecca Sommer: Artist, journalist, photographer, documentary filmmaker
http://www.sommerfilms.org/

Photograph: Zapatistas women, Chiapas Mexico

Resources for Activist Scholars

Articles

Black Flag Over Seattle

Books

Fighting for Our Lives
Networks and Netwars
Psychological Warfare
Science of Coercion
War of Ideas

Briefings

The Road to Athena's Camp

Curricula

Communications for Change

Editorials

Unfair Dealing

Essays

On Strategy, Tactics and Intelligence

Manuals

Get the Facts on Anyone
Guidelines for Preparing Briefings
The Investigative Reporter's Handbook
The Opposition Research Handbook

Videos

Indigenous Delegates Excluded
Indigenous Resistance to Globalization
Tribes Institutions Markets Networks

Papers

The Advent of Netwar
Anti-Indian Movement on the Tribal Frontier
Beyond the Blog
Communication, Power and Counter-power in Network Society
Making Sense Digitally
Multimodality
Networks, Netwars, and the Fight for the Future
Storytelling and Globalization
Weblog Community
The Zapatista Social Netwar in Mexico

Reference

Netwar

Reports

Abridging the Vote
Institutional Memory as Community Safeguard
Offsetting Resistance
Pimps of Militarism
The Power of Moral Sanction
Principles of Psywar
Protectors of the Oligarchy
The Public Health Model
Research as Organizing Tool
Shell Games
Trampling on the Treaties
Wise Use in Northern Puget Sound

Painting: Mangu putra, Kartini   Artist: Julien Martello

Project of Intercontinental Cry and Public Good Project under the Creative Direction of Wrong Kind of Green