Communications in Conflict

Summer/Fall 2013

CONTENTS

Note from the Author
Jay Taber

Preface
John Ahniwanika Schertow

Opposition Research
Jay Taber

Intelligence Information Ideas
Jay Taber

Resources for Activist Scholars

TOPICS
Science of Coercion
Indigenous Nations
Netwar
Psychological Warfare
Public Health Model

“Fighting for our lives”
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 Wise Use.

"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 shed 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

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 intelligence estimates. Some of these vigilantes had already threatened my associates 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 for 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 anticipating 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
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 Ahniwaniaka 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 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.

WHEN 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.

WHILE 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 their fantasy and the opposition just runs right over them."

P ART OF THE problem, according to Paul, is mainstream media. Reporters interview people who don'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."

I N 1996, PAUL developed a research train- ing course for a university class to iden- tify investigative reporter’s handbook. The Opposition Research Handbook, and Get the Facts on Anyone, then did full back- ground checks on the anti-democratic activists.

"S PAUL POINTS out, though, most advocacy groups are strictly orien- ted to public policy, not the process. They do not do opposi- tion 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 insti- tutional."

D EVIN BURGHART, VICE presi- dent of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights, played a key role in defeating the nationwide anti-immigrant cam- paign in 2005-2006 in the US. In that capac- ity, he organized a monitoring and reporting system to determine where non-profits, once converted from the ideological projection model, he says, "where you imagine what the opposi- tion is and respond to your imagination, actually get into research, analysis, and intervention"—what Paul calls The Public Health Model.

T HE FOUR BASIC models typically used to combat anti-democratic groups are law enforcement, politi- cal 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 behav- ior is transmitted, and what sort of interven- tions 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."

P AUL ACKNOWLEDGES that some of the regional human rights orga- nizations have done very good edu- cational 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 func- tions 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.""

E VIN 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 appro- priate 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 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 hate...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 organiz- ing 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.

A S BURGHART OBSERVES, "People often think that research is some- thing 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 organiza- tional 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 institutional memory, to keep the information they bring in through research and analysis, and dis- tribute it throughout the organization, develop- ing the organizational respect required to internalize it enough to keep the infor- mation flowing beyond any single person's involvement.""

"LASTLY," HE SAYS, "they need to develop some financial and organiza- tional stability, so that groups aren't just putting up on an ad hoc basis when an incident arises." By being engaged with regional and national organi- zations, Burghart says, "you can break down that barrier of isolation and share informa- tion across borders and expand your scope, and also make sure you're not the only ones who have that information." Because some- times, 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 representa- tive of the entire world. It helps to maintain perspective."

T ARSO LUIS RAMOS, executive direc- tor at Political Research Associates, says, "A very mistaken notion of power, the logjam prevalent one, is that knowledge is power; that correct information is enough to discredit illegiti- mate arguments or organizing efforts. Our experience has been that's simply not true.""

B ELIEVING 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 spe- cific 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 rela- tively short period of time.""

F OR CHUCK TANNER of Borderlands Research and Education, one point that stands out is the ability of research to highlight the constitu- ences our opponents are targeting for recruitment and the messages and methods they use. Thus, he says, an ally in strat- egy development, defining research needs in relation to that strategy.

T HE 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.

N TERMS OF THE most practical devel- opment of community-based research capacity, Tarso says linking in strategi- cally 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 bothering them...exist in many communities and are incred- ible resources...It's been important to me as a researcher to identify people like that."

N CLOSING, T ARSO proposes that in order to build collective power, it's neces- sary for researchers to be well connected as leaders within organiza- tions, even if the primary function of those individuals continues to be research, as opposed to trying to get them to do research. As he observes, "Often times researchers aren't functioning in differ- ent skill sets and you shouldn't try to do both things. But I think making those connec- tions is vital."

"In creating moral barriers to hate-mon- sterizing as quasi-governmental agencies," he explains his point. "They need to...to isolate the source of the power, but a prevalent one, is that knowledge is power; that correct information is enough to discredit illegiti- mate arguments or organizing efforts. Our experience has been that's simply not true.""

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C OMMUNICATIONS IN CONFLICT 8 C OMMUNICATIONS IN CONFLICT 9
BECAUSE 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.”

“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.”

GOOD 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.”

N TRAININGS TANNER has done for the United Auto Workers Civil Rights Department, people were very concerned about the fear that organized white supremacists posed to civil rights. Through research, Chuck was able to show that some of these 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.”

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.

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.”

IN 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 these 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.
A 5 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 rules, 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, usage, and customs of war — covert, often disguised. In a theater of war — physical or psychological — there are combatants and noncombatants and at least two sides, as well as many interests. In a communalized 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 unhumbled 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. 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 misunderstandings 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 of 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 a communalized 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.

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Intelligence Information Ideas

— all intentionally utilize words to commu-
nicate their unique perspectives and prefer-
ences. Words are chosen for their effect in
creation stories, in mythologies, in advertis-
ing, and in propaganda.

Words themselves are invented for a pur-
purpose. They serve as tools of social orga-
nization, as weapons of war, as means of
propaganda, and as medicine for the
malign
ed.

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 gen-
erate resentment. Not all messages are
appreciated.

Learning to use words effectively requires
an understanding of the principles of com-
munication, especially in what is termed
netwar, which assumes that all communi-
cation, in all its forms, is political. Com-
munications is contested, no matter the
stated intent of the participants. Words are
meant to achieve, and as proposi-
tions 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 schol-
ars 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 pa-
ied by these devoted humanitarians to the prin-
ciples of this science.

As it is, many writers — while often infor-
mative — are sometimes difficult to follow,
as they offer bits of topics here and there.
Part of effective storytelling is to be interest-
ing, 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 liter-
ature, 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 con-
lict 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
left to the army in Mexico City ten days before
300 students were murdered at
in the national conflict of 1968 — where
indigenous Mexican revolutionaries, born
way of life for well over a decade.

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 con-
flicts. Involving the use of biological warfare, this maneuverability is enhanced by
improvements in communications tech-
nology as well as new sociological doctrine,
strategy and tactics. Netwar in the Emerald
City, by their colleague Paul de Armond, illu-
scribed the techniques of netwar against
WTO Ministerial fracas, commonly known as
The Battle in Seattle.

At the 2008 UN climate talks in Poznan, the
city of Poznan, the network of non-indigenous activists involved in
environmental restoration in support of
human rights advocacy, and pro-democracy
organizing. Considered distinct issues by the institu-
tions meeting in Poland, the connectivity of these values is consolidated in the tribal
worldview under the law of generosity,
offered as key to the liberation movement. While
liberation movements and the networks
communication is 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
kidnap them, and if they have committed
wrong, we will put them in prison...”

because this is the time that has come. We
say that coexisting with them is not possi-
able, because their existence means our
appearance.”

For readers looking to better understand the
relationships between indigenous peoples,
revolution and democracy, my friend David
Ronfeldt’s book The Zapataista 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
everally rise from a grand alliance
among diverse NGOs and other civil-soci-
ety actors who are attuned to the doctrinal
elements of netwar. They will increasingly
have the organizational, technological, and
social infrastructures to fight against recal-
citrant governments, as well as to operate
in tandem with governments and suprana-
tional bodies that may favor the movement.”

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 established
with the perspective of time and maturation
and contextual change. And in 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 social
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 citi-
ger.” These networks — emerging in
response to broad societal conditions —
embrace, he notes, “a distinct cluster of
values, norms, and codes of behavior”
that, combined with other forms, “allow
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 narra-
tives 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,
much 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 Noopoli,
David Ronfeldt and John Arquilla repli-
cated in useful ways their earlier analysis of the
revolution of planetary consciousness. Their
emphasize on the role of information struc-
turing 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 exponen-
tial increase in unmediated communication,
they note that, “It may be a while before pro-
cipitous conditions re-emerge.”

Scholars of social change and asymmetrical
conflict will likely find the attached bibliog-
rphy 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 instrumentalism.

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 in The Simulacrum in her multi-part series at Wrang Kind of Green on the non-profit industrial complex, domestocratising 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 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 wars, 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 exposé of Avaaz -- the creme de la creme of neoliberal activism -- Cory Morningstar details the consumer brand arrogance of 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 invaders 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.

Aby the money is used in the manual are sowing dissension, distrust, fear and hopelessness.

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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.”

RESEARCH AS ORGANIZING TOOL

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

“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 assumptions, 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.
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