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Information Warfare, China, and South Korea: More Than a Military Concept

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Author: Editor

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Abstract. This article emphasizes events suggesting that information warfare is a security concept that transcends military issues.

The very term information warfare (IW) conveys military connotations such as chemical, biological, nuclear, and conventional warfares. Yet the most significant import and impact of IW usually occur during the cold war of peace--the peace of continuous conflict. One recent example has to do with Chinese attempts to regulate domestic use of the Internet. As reported by Erik Eckholm of the New York Times, the Chinese Government is attempting to foster economic growth and flexibility while maintaining very tight political control. This challenge is difficult enough, but the Internet further compounds it. Government policies such as blocking access to suspect web sites and instituting sanctions against Internet activities--such as "defaming the Government" and "splitting the country"--can be easily circumvented through the constant creation of new sites, the establishment of innocuous web addresses to help mask controversial web sites, and the transmission of email from outside the country to masses of domestic email addresses. In a manner only dreamed of by the implementers of radio warfare during the Cold War, the Internet and email warriors of today are worthy opponents of their totalitarian foes.

Another recent example is taken from South Korea. The most casual comment of an international finance expert, well-known politician, or other credible source may have huge effects on the current capital markets and economic crisis. Intentional subversion of a fragile economy--as well as one in crisis--can have huge effects on social, cultural, political, and military viability. Thus it should not be surprising that an American journalist was jailed in South Korea--allegedly for reporting through a Korean-language radio station in Los Angeles that a Korean newspaper was having severe financial difficulty and would be acquired by a conglomerate. (The story turned out to be partially inaccurate.) As well, two Koreans working in the securities industry have been charged with spreading rumors.

Are these Korean examples of IW? Probably not. A case can be made that they better exemplify issues of freedom of speech, human rights, accuracy of reporting, stringent Government oversight of public information and a concurrent political culture that precedes the current economic crisis, or achieving personal or professional advantage through questionable procedures. However, as previously described by IBPP, they can serve as useful operational concepts for future IW perpetrators through the ethological approach. In other words, phenomena that occur in the daily course of events can be intentionally created, simulated, or dissimulated for political objectives. (See IBPP, 1(4)). As the globalization of economic activity--fiscal, monetary, business, and trade--continues to intensify, rumors can be more damaging than the bullets of military conflict.

More than ever, a nation-state needs a comprehensive IW policy that covers the gamut of human activity. Restricting IW to a military concept is itself a national security threat. (See Eckholm, E. (December 31, 1997). China cracks down on dissent in cyberspace. the New York Times, p. A3; Editorial: An ethological approach to information warfare. (November 22, 1996). IBPP, 1(4); Kapferer, J.N. (1989). A mass poisoning rumor in Europe. Public Opinion Quarterly, 53, 467-481; Kristoff, N.D. (January 7,

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1997). New can be 'rumor' in South Korea, and lead to jail. The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Ojha, A.B. (1973). Rumor research: An overview. *Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology*, 10, 56-65; Rosnow, R.L. (1980). Psychology of rumor reconsidered. *Psychological Bulletin*, 87, 578-591.) (Keywords: Globalization, Information Warfare, Perception Management.)