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The Other Information Warfare: A Mind Full of Macedonia

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Abstract. This article highlights ongoing aspects of psychological warfare in Macedonia between government and rebel forces.

With the new millennium, most analyses of information warfare are focusing on modifying computer hardware, software, and content and counters to modification. These analyses fall under the rubric of cyberwarfare and further suggest that it presents a whole new world of security vulnerability. However, in the feeding frenzy to confront the novel, vulnerabilities from classical threats of information warfare seem to be unattended, discounted, or forgotten. These classical threats are social psychological in nature; comprise the behavioral sequelae of combinations of source, medium, content, target, and situational variables; and have been employed for thousands of years.

A case in point involves the ongoing conflict in Macedonia. A Macedonian police chief castigates the Albanian rebels for seeking not to penetrate the city of Tetovo but only to stir up tensions among its population. The premise here is that the rebels should be negatively appraised for not mounting traditional military actions. Yet, the rebels are acting quite prudently given their small numbers and weapons capabilities. Moreover, to "stir up tensions" is a traditional military action often preceding other military attacks, complementing or supplementing other military attacks, or otherwise designed to help achieve the political objectives that are the goals of all warfare.

The Albanian rebels are also being castigated by Macedonian governmental authorities for inducing Slavic policemen to accuse Albanian citizens of Macedonia of siding with the rebels and for inducing the few Albanian policemen of the Macedonian government to blame Slavic policemen for causing civilian injuries among the Albanian population. This certainly mirrors some of the intent of the rebels. However, it also should be noted that information warfare rarely elicits behaviors that do not already possess significant potentiality for expression. Those casting stones may need to be stoned as well.

As well, the United Nations envoy for the Balkans has castigated the Albanian rebels through the statement that "You cannot talk of politics with weapons in your hands. That is not what democracy is." Yet, warfare is but only one means of politics given that politics denotes securing assets to satisfy needs when there are more needs than assets within salient populations. Moreover, democracies can engage in domestic and external warfare without losing democratic status.

Mindful of current events in Macedonia, one might hope that the novelty of cyberwarfare still allows security authorities throughout the world to maintain and further develop expertise in the classical aspects of information warfare. They are as close as gums to teeth, and those who don't remember this are liable to be bitten. (See Gall, C. (March 17, 2001). West is alarmed as warfare grows inside Macedonia. The New York Times, pp. A1; A4; Merari, A., & Friedland, N. (1985). Social psychological aspects of political terrorism. Applied Social Psychology Annual, 6, 185-205; Mihanovic, M., Jukic, V., & Milas, M. (1994). Rumors in psychological warfare. Socijalna Psihijatrija, 22, 75-82; Sherkovin, Y.A., & Nazaretyan, A.P. (1984). Rumors as a social phenomenon and as an instrument of psychological warfare. Psikologicheskii Zhurnal, 5, 41-51; Whittaker, J.O. (1997). Psychological warfare in Vietnam. Political

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