

# The age of asymmetric warfare

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Manoeuvre is the combination of fire and movement, to achieve a position of advantage relative to the enemy. It aims to attack the enemy's cohesion and willingness to fight, rather than simply destroying their capability. Moving on from this, Information Manoeuvre (IM) integrates and synchronises Land's information capabilities to establish unity of effort across Defence's 'federated enterprises' for Networks, Intelligence, Cyber, Influence and Security. By exploiting the synergies between these capabilities, it enables a position of advantage in the physical and virtual dimensions, to deliver decisive outcomes in the cognitive. This is achieved by shaping our audiences' perceptions and maintaining or changing their behaviour, in line with the commander's intent. The definition itself is wide and sweeping in its generalistic all-encompassing agenda. However, at its core and in its most implicit form, it is the timely and effect use of assets and capabilities, within the virtual environment, to create and sustain a physical environment in which our forces can operate with freedom on manoeuvre to achieve a desired outcome.

In the 21st century the battle field is no longer dominated by opposing forces set across a contested area. Instead trending towards a growing significance of data and connectivity within a landscape where geography and physicality are becoming less significant. Post-geography operations require a change of mind set amongst UK forces to ensure that we are adequately defended against key cyber and information age threats, whilst ensuring that the British army has the ability to act offensively. The concept of war itself continues to evolve in line with the definition of the modern battlefield and has entered the age of Asymmetric Warfare.

Asymmetric warfare is defined as the ' blurring of the lines between politics, economics, combatants, civilians, and their context in the prosecution of war. Inclusive in this is cyber, communications, terrorism and the use of civilians as human shields and propagators for effect both as offensive and defensive weapons. One thing that has remained consistent however is where warfare both begins and finishes, the cognitive. War is fought in the minds of men and is a political instrument, ' a continuation of political activity by other means', the driving power of the civilian populace and not simply the military machine within war itself, in essence to control, manipulate and influence the civilian populace both at home and in the area of conflict, whether they be enemy supporters, actors or audience, is to control the progression of an operation. Creating adaptable models to encompass the models within Asymmetric Warfare which can be used at all decision models is a colossal task due to the necessity to encompass not only the liability of friendly forces both organic and allied, but also perceived enemy forces and relevant or potentially relevant third parties such as civilian governments and services. These models will enable to efficient targeting for information effects to cause maximum disruption to an opponent's decision-making process whilst simultaneously allowing us to exploit then mitigate our own weaknesses.

It terms of the impact of IM operations on a near -future battlefield against a near-peer or peer-plus enemy, it is arguable that British forces are already in a cognitive war utilising the developing utilities of IM to manipulate the world platform against rising and established world powers within the information spectrum. IM Operations by their very nature are enduring and limited only

to a nation's ability to manipulate the virtual field to its desired physical outcomes. A recent and ongoing example of this is the Russian IM Operations in the Ukraine. In this conflict Russia has used its version of IM (Information War) effectively, placing weight on what Russia calls ' Reflexive Control' (Reflexive control causes a stronger adversary voluntarily to choose the actions most advantageous to Russian objectives by shaping the adversary's perceptions of the situation decisively.) in the form of Perception management of the Ukraine populace and misdirection of the media on a global plane alongside its unspoken and inevitably unneeded superior military power to achieve its political and operational aims.

The whole time, interference of Russia's agenda from Europe and the US was perpetually non-existent with its media condemnation largely passive, due to the civilian populace of the concerned nations remaining unwilling to back physical involvement due to Russia's operations of social media, news and plausible deniability of unwarranted offensive actions. In terms of the IM Operations role in the spectrum of conflict, this example showcases the part that IM plays in the ' period of constant competition', effectively DETERing large scale opposing force and creating global uncertainty over Russia's intent both current and future and the necessity of deployment for intervention. In essence, in the initial phase of conflict, the as of yet unrefined use of IM has led to a mass downscaling in the need for physical deploy ability, increased situational awareness and influence within the political field and also allowed for effective manoeuvre of assets in a timely fashion to where they could have the most direct impact within the desired intent.

That being said, the results achieved thus far during this political have not been a complete success. The West has not intervened materially within the conflict which has allowed Russia to expand its influence over state actors and consolidate what military forces are deployed. It has successfully conducted internal conflict between Europe and the US and orchestrated delays in response. However, it has not managed to influence civilian attitude on global scale to a level that its involvement within the Ukraine has been publicly sanctioned and initial hopes that Ukraine would ultimately be coerced and contrived into providing a Moscow-friendly force that would take power internally both through force and politics currently seem far flung.

By far the largest failure of Russia's Information War to date has been its inability to utilise IM in the 'stabilisation phase and persistent engagement' within the Spectrum of conflict. Support from its Allies has stabilised at best and realistically shows signs of diminishment from both state and economic actors (largely due to sanctions applied by NATO). Reasoning behind this decline in effectiveness is disputable, but it could be assumed that Russia relied too heavily on the unexpectedness of its movements within Ukraine and not enough on the actors and audience both within the area and globally. Manipulation of its own state media and strict controls over the 'freedom of press' within its home borders has possibly left Russia temporarily unable to fully exploit the more diverse fields that play an important part in the larger utilisation of IM. However, it would be ignorant to accept that the doctrine of Information War and reflexive control will not evolve and adapt.

The evolution of global media, its influence on public opinion and advancements in real time technology for use in the operational level makes it clear that all future conflicts, regardless of the adversary will be pivoted around the exploitation and adaptability of IM operations conducted by UK Forces. It will take investments of time, training in scenarios based on future operating environments, equipment and the continuous refinement and fluidity of doctrine to ensure that this multi-dimensional aspect of modern war is dominated and utilised to achieve a strategic effect. The establishment of 77 Brigade is vital step in the right direction, pulling together parts of the force structure that manipulate and plan for the effect use of soft effects within the cyber and social fields. However, it is vital that policy and doctrine that this developmental joint organisation produces is appropriately used in conjunction with integrated action doctrine to ensure that future conflicts see a combined success on both the operational and strategic level going forward.