Information Warfare

Farwell, James P.

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Information Warfare: Forging Communication Strategies for Twenty-first Century Operational Environments.

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I am honored to write a preface for James Farwell’s book on information warfare. His opening examples—rooted in the work of Dr. Joseph L. Strange—draw on the experiences of Abraham Lincoln and, notably, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

As the Allies launched the invasion of Normandy, there was no question in the orders received by General Dwight D. Eisenhower: enter the continent of Europe to defeat the German Wehrmacht. Indeed, President Roosevelt’s strategy to defeat Nazi Germany and then-militarist Japan was clear. He laid the foundation for the strategy with his pronouncement in the Atlantic Charter’s four freedoms: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. He followed this expression of the four basic freedoms with a stirring speech before Congress to the American people. He roused Americans with his aggrieved expression of the sneak attack by Japanese forces on our air and naval forces at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Territory. Standing before Congress, Roosevelt’s forceful words about the surprise attack on 7 December 1941 as “a day that will live in infamy” stirred America to action. The president clearly communicated U.S. strategy to the American people, and his fireside chats continually communicated what was at stake and articulated progress.

Three war years later, General Eisenhower, acting as supreme Allied commander of Europe, on D-Day formulated a communication strategy encapsulated by the succinct phrase a “great crusade.” Eisenhower communicated this well to all soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen with his order on that day.

We know the rest of this history. There is now a pressing need to further study history so that we may use the lessons from the past to understand our present challenges and prepare for the future.

Communication of the World War II strategy to Americans, our Allies, and our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen was based on a well-designed and -practiced strategy. It is this design and practice of a communication strategy that this book encapsulates. In teaching how to forge a winning communication strategy, Farwell provides a real service to the Department of Defense community.

Information Warfare recognizes that a communication strategy is an intrinsic component of a national strategy. Farwell builds on the foundation laid by historical and contemporary thinkers who recognized the need to forge a communication strategy to conduct effective information warfare. The author defines a communication/information warfare strategy that is persuasive and credible. He distills key factors to frame the strategic thinking for information warfare. The book is innovatively organized in two parts:
• First, Farwell delivers a concise treatise about the key steps for a communication strategy. It includes historical and current examples that offer deep insights. Deference is made to the military concept of operational art. The examples illustrate the environment, the problem to be addressed, and the approach to be used. This instructional section is amply footnoted to provide tremendous depth.

• Second, an easy-to-use workbook employs a step-by-step methodology with questions for the reader to address in creating and evaluating their own communication strategies.

Each chapter is a robust learning experience, guiding the student from an initial explanation of what a communication strategy is and why it is an essential component of an information warfare campaign through methods for determining a strategic situation. This is a first-rate exposition of historical examples that illustrate key lessons, particularly in aligning cultural understanding. For example, Farwell cites the Malaysian rebellion, General George A. Custer at Little Bighorn, and the Roman–Germanic battle in the Teutoburg Forest, superbly illustrating aligned or misdirected approaches.

Failure to understand the enemy is key to a failed communication strategy, and Sun Tzu’s dictum “know your enemy as well as yourself” is discussed in detail. Using contemporary illustrations from the United States’ wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Farwell succinctly illuminates what must be done and what must be understood. Failure to consider aspects of communications and achieve information dominance and failure to understand cultural precepts are presented. In each case, historical and modern illustrations caveated with lessons to be learned are presented.

As a nation, the United States is expert at building partnerships. Our Revolutionary War experience in gaining France as an ally and partner and our ability to understand England at the negotiating table for our independence provide a keen backdrop to building domestic and foreign constituencies for common actions.

In these chapters, Farwell presents a how-to workbook on what questions need to be addressed in knowing your partner as well as yourself. This approach of knowing, understanding, and appreciating partners, potential opponents, and their cultures is replicated throughout the subsequent chapters. Many current examples from Iraq and Afghanistan are integrated with examples from Panama, Somalia, and Ethiopia along with historical examples from World War II. Each example is succinctly parsed to illustrate the points to be learned.

Farwell also provides a checklist for building a communication campaign that includes 24 characteristics of good communication strategies. One of the characteristics is the ability to measure progress; another is “sharing with relevant parties so that everyone is on the same page,” using Operation Eagle Claw (Iran, 1980) as a case study; another is to define keys to success. In each case, the checklist provides methods for ensuring the communications message is clear. Establishing a campaign’s narrative, story, theme, and message is thoroughly explicated with useful examples.

An entire chapter is devoted to campaign leadership and to explaining a leadership model based on four actions: listen, learn, help, and lead. Farwell offers the examples of Winston Churchill and Roosevelt against Adolf Hitler in World War II,
Lincoln and his team of rivals compared to Jefferson Davis, and President Eisenhower’s military background in national security decision making to illustrate the concept that leadership makes the difference between winning and losing.

Farwell offers a list of profound and pithy dos and don’ts for communication strategies, using current and historical illustrations and observations. The Tet offensive in Vietnam in 1968 is a superb example of the necessity for actions to support a message and for leaders to project confidence, competence, and the fact that a strategy aimed at achieving a defined outcome exists.

The author stresses the need to use and integrate social media in the communication strategy. This is a capital idea. He illustrates the need for, and the success of, social media messaging inherent in designing the communication strategy. The global target audience is rising astronomically. Demographically, the audience is huge and growing exponentially. How can intelligence be used to measure trends; changes; outcomes?

Farwell’s final instructional chapter investigates the changing nature of the information environment in the past five years. He concludes that cultural, political, media, and political party changes are occurring alongside dramatic technological change. This is one of the underpinnings for the communication campaign.

He concludes with a workbook that poses a series of questions to evaluate a communication campaign. Key questions are asked, factors are presented that help to measure effectiveness, and techniques are listed for measuring effectiveness and target audience analysis. This is helpful stuff.

*Information Warfare* is an instrument for learning about the need to design and implement communication strategies today. I highly recommend it be used in professional development programs in the business and diplomatic community. Most importantly, I fervently advise that this book should be studied and used throughout the military, especially the special operations community. Farwell’s superb text makes the lessons and insights he offers actionable and practical.

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**Endnote**
