

The first 'Information War'

The legacy still haunts the soldiers

MD. SHAMSUL ISLAM

THE term 'information war' has become the buzzword in interstate relations nowadays. According to Martin C. Libicki, a renowned US defence analyst, this concept encompasses seven different but interconnected forms of warfare: command and control warfare, intelligence-based warfare, electronic warfare, psychological warfare, hacker warfare, economic information warfare and cyber warfare. History is replete with evidences that information or communication played a major role in all types of war. But the technological changes and the integration of those changes into weapons, concepts and organisations means the role of information compared to more conventional measures of military strength has increased to a significant extent.

The Gulf War in 1990-91 was the first example of it, which witnessed unprecedented use of media, psychological operations and other related means, for which it has been termed the 'first information war'. Never before in history, have so many books been written analysing media's and information's role in one particular war. Gulf War experiences show that the nature of present and future warfare. It also shows how information and communication are a vital tool to defeat the enemy in, and out of, the battlefield. A newer concept in strategic studies, i.e. the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) is gaining currency where information warfare is a very important component - and the Gulf War contributed significantly to it.

Media's Role

The Gulf War and CNN became synonymous. The latter's sensational telecasting reached every corner of the globe. CNN created history by showing the almost live Scud and Patriot duel and vivid descriptions of attacks on Baghdad. Saddam's permission to foreign journalists, especially CNN, to send news from Baghdad was a watershed in military-media relations. He expected that the horrifying pictures would divide US public opinion. He thought it was an opportunity to portray himself a leader in front of the Arabs. He believed those Arab states who joined the coalition would break away. Furthermore, he had a fear that Baghdad may be attacked like Hanoi. However, specific military targets were attacked in Baghdad, instead of indiscriminate bombing. Although the F-117s destroyed the international telephone exchange during the initial attacks, the CNN crew used its portable satellite connections to telecast to the world. This was the first time in any war that the media telecast live from the enemy territory. This allowed the world viewers to get every detail of war in their homes. As a result, CNN could outshine all the other competitors and could create a sensation in war reporting. Iraqis did not mind it because they found it was also giving them service by providing a narrative of the war horror.

From the very beginning, the allied coalition was very much cautious to manage the coverage.

With the Gulf War, military-media relations entered into a new phase as the media were used to achieve strategic objectives and to pacify the global civil society. The question also arises whether media can give a partial view or rosy picture and deprive the audience of the real picture. The use of media to deceive the opponents, and unnecessary media hype could be very dangerous in the long run.

Vietnam experiences show that if the public opinion is divided or if there is lack of consensus among the elite, it is very difficult to engage in a war for the US. In fact, public perception of the war is very important in western countries in general, and USA in particular. The media did not create any problem for US administration by forming negative public opinion against the war.

There were as many as 1600 journalists in Saudi Arabia - all time high to cover a particular war. A pool system was introduced whereby the select band of journalists accompanying the troops was supposed to share their material with the majority of the press corps back in Riyadh. Because of the pool, where US journalists were only privileged, US media became more powerful to construct a favourable image of the war worldwide. The allies created a "controlled information environment" for the journalists working in Saudi Arabia. America, the central power of the coalition, had to ensure that their 'information policy' became successful. Censorship was applied to attain this objective. Iraqis also put restrictions by telling that media were helping Iraqi targets.

So, the military had to manoeuvre the media in order to gain its objectives and the media became dependent upon the coalition military. It was 'monopoly in the guise of pluralism'. It became fairly evident that barring media from portraying the real war was necessary. As mentioned, censorship of news was mainly security and related aspects. This censorship created much hue and cry among the journalists. In the name of preserving security, the free flow of information was controlled.

Another pressing issue for the allied coalition was how to manage the collateral damage. For instance, the Amiria suburb of Baghdad city was hit by two allied precision-guided bombs, killing hundreds of people. That was a joy for Iraqi authorities, all censorship and reporting restrictions were lifted, and that placed the allied coalition in a dilemma. Such incidents only exposed the vulnerability of military might vis-a-vis public opinion. But the allied coalition was very cautious about collateral damage and probable shift of public opinion. As a result, such cases were not too many. Needless to mention this was a new dimension in war strategy.

Use of Psychological Operations

Though Psychological Operations (PSYOPs) is one of the oldest weapons, the Gulf War witnessed the massive use of it by both the allied coalition and Iraq.

Allied PSYOPs use: President Bush had issued three secret directives between August and December outlining the PSYOPs campaign inside the occupied

country with a combined use of 'black' radio stations and leaflet propaganda. Thousands of transistor radios had been smuggled into Kuwait and southern Iraq with the help of nomads so that the enemy troops could listen to coalition

world. The well known story of Iraqis taking Kuwaiti babies from occupied Kuwaiti hospitals and throwing them on the floor, was in fact, created by an American public relations company. Moreover, allied PSYOPs were effective in a manner

for Iraqi infants was allegedly attacked by the coalition. Iraqi TV started telecasting that they murdered children. Baghdad failed to wage any meaningful offensive against the coalition by capitalising the anti-western feeling of the Arabs. Their PSYOPs lacked sophistication and were not exactly pre-tested like their counterpart's ones. Apart from some of the cases, they failed to create any desired effect.

Evolution of RMA and the Gulf War

The Gulf War has changed the military strategy as far as the future of warfare is concerned. A new concept, called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), is gaining increased currency. Central to the RMA argument is the role of information. The Gulf War was a new type of war, which was fought with precision weapons with minimal collateral damage and with vastly improved means of real-time information, surveillance and target acquisition. It was realised that destruction of the enemy's means of command and control should be the prime canon of military doctrine. This kind of warfare is being recognised as information age warfare characterised by manoeuvre rather than attrition. Electronic warfare, computer simulation - these were used to take advantage of information. As allied members control commercially available downlinks, an Iraqi satellite intelligence was denied. These are really revolutionary changes in the modern-day warfare.

Conclusion

In fact, the Gulf War is a 'glimpse' of post-industrial information age warfare, which saw quantum improvement in terms of precision, speed and information manoeuvrability. Unprecedented advances in media and communication technologies have changed the whole dimension of war. Instant communication channels, from telephone to satellite, all were instrumental in the coalition victory. Though America was the key force in the coalition, the toughest job for President Bush was to form the coalition and to get a UN mandate. In this process, the telephone was one of Bush's most potential instruments of power in assembling the international coalition against Iraq.

The media actively participated in the war and was an effective tool of the military. With the Gulf War, military-media relations entered into a new phase as the media were used to achieve strategic objectives and to pacify the global civil society. Whether such use is in consonance with the ideas of liberal democracy and free flow of information can be the subject matter of a different discussion. The question also arises whether media can give a partial view or rosy picture and



CNN continued its job despite destruction of satellite stations in the war.

broadcasts.

The Voice of the Gulf radio network located in Saudi Arabia operated January 1991 through April of the same year. Psychological warfare radio stations presumably transmitting from Saudi Arabia, such as the allegedly CIA-run Voice of Free Iraq and Radio Free Iraq, called upon the Kurdish and Shia Iraqis to rise up against the 'Saddam Hussein gang.' One of the main aspects of the coalition's psychological warfare activities was to encourage Iraqi troops to defect. One method was to drop leaflets from air, prior to an air strike, announcing precisely when the raid would take place, and then bombing saying 'we told you to do so'. Over a seven-week period, 29 million leaflets in at least 14 varieties were dropped behind Iraqi lines, reaching approximately 98 per cent of the 300,000 troops. According to the International Red Cross, nearly 87,000 Iraqi soldiers surrendered to coalition forces, most of them clutching the leaflets or hiding them in the clothing.

Allied PSYOPs were very sophisticated, and sometimes they got phenomenal result around the

that some people want to correlate US black propaganda with the Shia and Kurdish uprisings at the end of the war.

Iraqi PSYOPs use: Iraqis also used PSYOPs extensively. Saddam's attempt to link the Palestine issue with Iraq, and that Israel had taken part in the war, only confused the Muslim world at best. Another famous propaganda was radio broadcasts of 'Baghdad Betty' to the American troops, which tried to provoke the soldiers telling that while they were sacrificing their lives, their wives and lovers were sleeping with Tom Cruise, Bart Simpson and Bruce Willis. Such propaganda only heightened allied soldiers' morale and failed miserably.

Iraqi television showed 13 captured pilots parading on 20 January, 1991, which was picked up by CNN and was telecast globally. The telecast resulted in fear and anger worldwide and it seemed Saddam's attempt became successful to create Vietnam-style propaganda. Most interesting, however, was the baby milk plant episode, when CNN broadcast on 23 January, 1991 that a milk factory

Jordanians split over "Sharon effect"

RANDA HABIB
writes from Amman

JORDAN'S relations with neighbouring Israel have been officially cordial since 1994, when Jordan became the second Arab country to sign a peace treaty with the Jewish state, following Egypt in 1979.

But there is a broad undercurrent of anti-Israeli feeling in Jordan, where roughly half of the five-million-strong population is of Palestinian origins.

And relations have cooled significantly since the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation broke out in September.

Jordan has named a successor to its recently retired ambassador to Israel, but has delayed sending him in protest at the violence.

Until now, Jordanian officials have refrained from commenting on the prospects of an electoral win by

Ariel Sharon, hawkish leader of the right-wing Likud party and a man Arab's love to hate.

But Sharon is running some 20 points ahead of caretaker Prime Minister and Labour party candidate Ehud Barak in the run-up to the February 6 election, making him the almost virtual winner, and his comments prompted a sharp reply from Jordan's prime minister, Ali Abu Ragheb.

Sharon had told Israel's Yediot Aharonot daily: "There is a risk of Yasser Arafat toppling the Hashemite regime in Jordan and establishing a Palestinian state in that country."

Abu Ragheb replied sharply, saying in remarks to AFP Wednesday that "these statements are nonsense and are aimed at sowing discord between Jordanians and Palestinians."

Sharon's statements are aimed

at "undermining the whole peace process by turning attention away from the key issues towards issues that are the fruit of the imagination," Abu Ragheb said.

Sharon had also said the Jordanians had told him of their concerns, saying for that very reason they wanted Israel to stand firm along the entirety of the West Bank of the Jordan Valley, which separates the two countries.

Abu Ragheb firmly denied that Jordan made such statements. "Jordan is impatiently waiting for the day when it will have common borders with the Palestinian territories that would be controlled on the Palestinian side by the Palestinians themselves."

To temper the mood, a government official stressed that the peace treaty stipulates clearly marked borders between Jordan and Israel which automatically rule out the



Ariel Sharon

notion of "Jordan as a Palestinian state."

Meanwhile, another senior Jordanian official Wednesday expressed hope that if Sharon does win next Tuesday, he will uphold Israel's commitment to peace.

In contrast, a Jordanian senator

and a political analyst said they feared the worst is yet to come.

"A victory by Ariel Sharon will mean a change of style but not of principles concerning the (Arab-Israeli) peace process," the senior cabinet official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Once elected Sharon "must adopt a political vision that takes into account the interests of his country and not only those of the Likud," the official said.

Nevertheless, Sharon continues to symbolise "evil," Jordanian senators and analysts told AFP.

"In the minds of most Jordanians, Ariel Sharon is also the one who ordered the Sabra and Shatila massacres" in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982, the senator said.

"His victory will, undoubtedly, strengthen the anti-Israeli camp" in Jordan, which has steadfastly campaigned for the abrogation of the 1994 peace treaty, the senator said.

A senior political analyst said a Sharon victory would complicate the delicate domestic balance inside Jordan, "where the most serious challenge will be to preserve intact the peace treaty and relations with Israel."

The "Sharon effect" over Jordan will also depend on the repercussions his election will have in the Palestinian territories. "If he pursues his policies of provocation, the result will be an escalation of violence in the territories, and this will have serious economic repercussions in Jordan," the analyst said on condition of anonymity.

Some officials, however, believe that the new US administration of President George W Bush will be tougher on Israel than the previous one, forcing Sharon to tone down his positions.

Politicians also hope that a Sharon victory will prompt Arabs to close ranks in defiance against the one they consider their "enemy number one."

"Arab countries are united in danger and divided in peace," one politician said.

"A man like Iraqi President Saddam Hussein will gain in popularity if Sharon is elected in Israel because Saddam is the one who challenged Israel by rocketing it with missiles" during the 1991 Gulf war, he added.

AFP

Dr. Rubaiul Murshed

All health information to keep you up to date

Know your medicines

Topical skin preparations
These are preparations designed for application to the skin and other surgate tissues of the body. Preservatives are usually included to reduce the growth of bacteria. The most commonly used types of skin preparations are described below.

A cream: A cream is a non-greasy preparation used to apply drugs to an area of the body or to cool or moisten the skin. It is less noticeable than an ointment.

An ointment: An ointment is a greasy preparation used to apply drugs to an area of the body, or acts as a protective or lubricant layer for the relief of dry skin conditions.

A lotion: A lotion is a solution or suspension applied to unbroken skin to cool and dry the affected area. Some are more suitable for use in hairy areas since they are not as sticky as creams or ointments.

Around the world

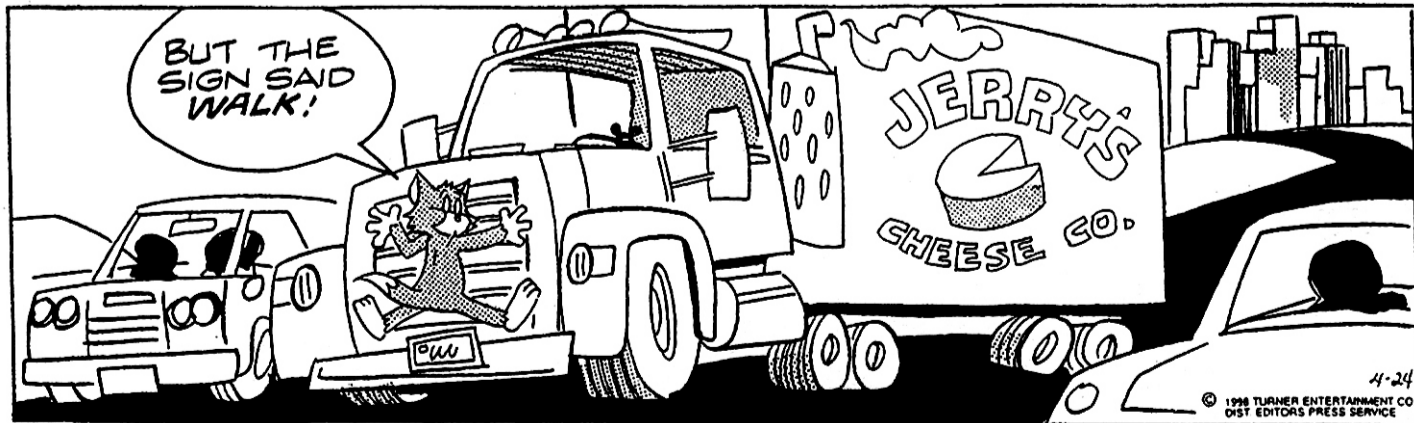
Stress and caffeine
A recent study suggests that caffeine can push blood pressure to unhealthy levels when taken in stressful situations. William Lovallo and colleagues at the Veterans Affairs Medical Centre in Oklahoma City found that caffeine alone sent blood pressure up in 31 male medical students they tested. Adding the stress of exam-days took it even higher. Students who already had hypertension, or who had a family history and thus were considered at risk, had the highest blood pressure spikes.

The researchers conclude that it may be beneficial for those at high risk for hypertension to limit their routine use of caffeinated beverages, especially when their work demands are high.

Next: Aged first

TOM & JERRY

By Hanna-Barbera



James Bond

