

# **Waging New Cold Wars**

## **Gaining Advantage in Great-Power Competition**

Robert Ehlers

22 January 2021

# Presentation Purpose and Content

- To foster thinking / action for informational aspects of GPR
- To review key aspects of the Cold War experience
- To consider how these large-order factors apply to you
- To think about how to exploit PRC and RF weaknesses
- To “export” your thinking to action in your workspaces
- To improve alignment and organizational structure / process

# Cold War Basics

- A forty-five year, information-dense, complex conflict
- The “I” in PMESII always at the center; many audiences
- An ideological and philosophical contest for global primacy
- A “long “wrestling match” with many initiative shifts
- Many military activities, but always supporting the “I”
- A display and test of which “system” was superior
- Audiences focused on each “system’s” rhetoric and reality
- Key MOE was loyalty of global audiences to one’s “system”
- Key indicators were views and realignments of audiences

# The Underpinnings of Success

- Unity of Purpose – Americans united in words and deeds
- Unity of Effort – USG & allies working together; integration
- Information – not merely an “enabler”; the “prime mover”
- Innovation – Integrated organizational structures / processes
- Patience – Generational focus, structure, and process
- Persistence – Continuous focus and action to gain advantage
- Continuity – Same basic approach across administrations
- Expertise – Understanding, time, depth, influence

# Unity of Purpose

- Americans united with regard to great-power rivalries
- Meta-narratives, narratives, and messages aligned
  - “The United States, despite its imperfections, has greater freedom, prosperity, and equality of opportunity than any other great power, and its ‘arc of improvement’ has been notably superior.”
- Some questions you might ask yourself:
  - Is the US more or less free than the RF and PRC? Does this matter?
  - Is the US more prosperous than the RF and PRC? Does this matter?
  - Do people have greater opportunity here than they would there?
  - Is the US moving in the right direction internally?
  - If not moving in the right direction, what does this mean for GPR?

# Unity of Effort

- How well do USG departments / agencies coordinate?
- How well do USG and allied / partner govt's coordinate?
- How effective is coordination within your organization?
- Where do you see disunity of effort? Can you address it?
- Are there sufficient interactions between USG players?
- How would you redesign your organization for GPR?
- Are there specific things you can do for unity of effort?

# Information

- Entirety of USG effort supported the meta-narrative
- “Winning without fighting” is the desired end-state
- Military is generally in a supporting but visible role
- Diplomats must stay focused on what matters most
- Economic activity is also profoundly informational
- There are rarely any winners in great-power wars
- There are never any informationally inept winners

# Innovation

- Organizational structure and process are vitally important
  - Integrated, standing planning groups for each major audience
  - Formal and informal information-sharing groups
  - Organizational design and “teams of teams”
  - “Modern” organizations must make room for newer ones
- Technologies’ effectiveness driven by structure / process
- Engaging numerous target audiences in parallel is key
- C2 processes must allow risk, failure, feedback, learning
- Time and depth: very old concepts, very new requirement



# Patience

- These kinds of races go to the tortoise, not to the hare
- Yet the tortoise must be uncommonly agile and resilient
- Setbacks and lengthy periods of disadvantage are normal
- Steadiness of purpose, meta-narrative, narratives are vital
- Minimal / careful policy changes between administrations
- A long “wrestling match” for allies, partners, neutrals
- Multiplicity of audiences; long time horizon to influence

# Persistence

- Meta-narrative must be front and center throughout
- Narratives must be steady and only evolve as required
- Messages must be nimble, continuous, and adaptive
- Engagement with target audiences must not be episodic
- If at first you don't succeed...be sure you do next time
- Stick with what works—and learn quickly what that is
- Be innovative, but stick closely to the meta-narrative
- Keep the “M” highly capable as last line of defense

# Continuity

- Continuity of purpose—don't let them see you blink
- Continuity of focus—stay engaged with the adversary
- Continuity of expertise—right people in right positions
- Continuity of knowledge—information pass-along
- Continuity of meta-narrative, narratives, messages
- Continuity of policy—one administration to the next

# Expertise

- Developing expertise requires time, depth, continuity
- Education and training are vital to success
- Experience is the ultimate teacher—learn and apply
- Professional development—reward long-term success
- Give information-focused personnel strong career paths
- If the conflict is generational, expertise should be too
- Expertise thrives in a community, not in a bubble

# Some Notes About Our Adversaries

- Far from infallible; alienating many countries / audiences
- Meta-narratives and narratives are wearing thin
  - Increasing divergence between rhetoric and reality
- Fear our alliances / partnerships—and helped build them
- PRC sees economic IOP as key; now over-reliant on it
- Internal problems are serious, especially in PRC
- Not as open to debate and dialogue as USG tends to be
- Are willing to cooperate on certain issues (not zero-sum)
- **All of this is grist for our informational mill**

# Reading Recommendations

- George Kennan (Mr. X), “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” (1947)
- NSC 68: “United States Objectives and Programs for National Security” (April 14, 1950)
- Thomas Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*
- Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*
- John Prados, *Keepers of the Keys* (history of the NSC)
- John Lewis Gaddis, *The US and the Origins of the Cold War* (2000)
- John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (2006)
- Dean Cheng, *Cyber Dragon* (2016)
- The multitude of CIA, NSA, DoS, DoD Cold War reports  
***(Read these contextually; don't fall prey to presentism)***

# Questions?

Robert Ehlers

[robert.ehlers@jmarkservices.com](mailto:robert.ehlers@jmarkservices.com)

325-227-3349

Senior Mentor, Information Environment Advanced Analysis (IEAA) Course

OUSD(I) Sponsored

Joint Staff / J7 Certified

Joint-Credit Awarding