IMAGINING INFLUENCE: LOGIC(AL) TENSIONS IN WAR AND DEFENCE

This chapter critically analyzes the philosophy, doctrine and practice of Influence Activity in defence. Influence Activity refers to a particular form of strategic communication conducted by the military in order to influence attitudes and behaviours through information-based activities. In doctrinal terms, Influence is defined as ‘the power or ability to affect someone’s beliefs or action or a person or thing with such ability or power’ (MoD, 2009: 88). This ‘power’ is simultaneously conceived of as generating both ‘affect’ – in which the state of a particular scenario or dynamic is altered- and ‘effect’ in which a particular outcome is accomplished (see Morriss, 2002). Here, I examine the philosophy and practice of Influence and its associated ‘effects’ through an examination of the three embedded logics that frame and govern it: military logic (a Clausewitzian orientation to war); marketing logic (an orientation marketing principles); and media logic. These logics are particularly revealing of an encompassing military orientation to war that is both responding and contributing to the conditions in which war is performed, but also directly impacting upon how it is performed; in other words, war that is mediatized.

This is explored here not only in relation to why ‘influence’ has assumed such centrality in the military’s understanding of war and defence, but also how influence is conceived and measured. In this latter regard, I argue that media (forms, ‘audiences’ and ‘effects’) are positioned in relatively idealistic terms as tangible, measurable and controllable, which, when combined with the application of ‘logics’, has a direct bearing on what, when and how media is utilized and understood. More specifically, I argue that this combination of logics and idealism is suggestive of an ‘imagining’ of (media) influence that directly relates to, and is framed by a fetishization of media (communication and effects). It is when this ‘imagining’ ‘feeds back’ into the performance of war and defence practice that we can most vividly locate the processes by which it becomes mediatized. In short, by problematizing
the logics and conceptualization of influence, this chapter explores why and how the transformative power of media has become integral to war and the extent to which this is also transformative of the organization and implementation of defence politics and war itself. I start by locating the doctrine of Influence Activities within the overall framework of the strategic communications.

THE LOGICS OF INFLUENCE

The world is increasingly hyperconnected and complex. One response to this in the defence sector is Strategic Communications. Acting as an umbrella under which the other key instruments of state power are positioned (diplomatic, economic and military) Strategic Communications is conceptualized as the co-ordination of information to perform, achieve and maintain influence on the global stage in order to advance national strategic objectives and security interests (see MoD, 2012: 3-11). In the context of radically transformed international relations defined by volatile global threats, high political and economic interdependence and the diffuse and fragmented nature of traditional state power, it is through influence that states believe they can gain and maintain power (House of Lords, 2014: 34). Influence in this regard is discursively positioned as (interchangeably) effect, persuasion, public diplomacy and soft power, and attraction (see Nye, 2004). It involves the upholding of national reputation, the promotion of trade and prosperity, and the generation of attraction and positive international relationships through communicative acts.

The British Military's contribution to the UK strategic communications policy, and the performance of influence, can be essentially divided into two (not mutually exclusive) forms of activity: Media Operations and Information Operations. Media Operations is the management of information about British military activities for global media and is in effect public relations work in support of national strategic and security objectives (see Maltby, 2012b). In contrast, Information Operations is predominantly tactically focused and incorporates a range of information-based activities (including Psychological Operations) to undermine the ‘will’ (to fight)
cohesion and decision-making ability’ of an adversary or potential adversary (MoD, 2002: 2-1).

Influencing Activity is located within the Information Operations remit. It attempts to influence the tactical space by influencing an adversary’s perceptions of their own actions (for example, by undermining the legitimacy of the leadership or eroding the moral power base) and influencing the perceptions of civilians within the region (MoD, 2002). By communicating messages of moral and physical support to those who oppose the enemy, or those who are undecided, the military believe that they can potentially affect the battle space, enhancing opportunities to advance their own cause. These communications may include face to face dialogue, letters, flyers, posters, CDs, DVDs, video, radio broadcasts, television, mobile phone (SMS in particular), email, new media, social media and leaflets (see Maltby & Thornham, 2012).

It is therefore the conscious and purposeful construction and management of communication that delineates Influencing Activity from other military activity. At the same time, influence is considered to pervade all military activity in some way by virtue of the impressions (and thus influence) that may be generated. As Brazier (2014) suggests: ‘Everything we [the military] say or do (or don’t do) shapes how others perceive us and influences what they do (or don’t do)’. I shall return to this point later. First, I want to draw attention to three central logics that underpin military Influencing Activity. Here I use the term logic to describe an ontological position, that is, a conceptual understanding of a ‘defence’ reality in which the rationalization of Influence Activity is embedded. Whilst the ‘logics’ discussed below do not all emanate from the defence community, the ways in which they are applied within military Influence Activity is revealing of a particular ontology and orientation to the word. It is through these logics that we can interrogate the centrality of media in the conceptualization of the intent, practice and consequence of Influence Activity and the ways in which it is illustrative of the processes of mediatization.
Military Logic

Perhaps the most significant logic from which influence originates in defence terms is that of military logic. Although positioned as the antithesis of hard power and coercive force, the ascendancy of influence in defence doctrine (and indeed political thinking) is based on the recognized principle that military force remains a relevant and important leverage of power. Compelling others to ‘our will’ is still, as Clausewitz (2007) states ‘an act of force’, and coercion and confrontation integral to what ‘war is’ (Holmqvist, 2013).

When I talk of the coercion here as a logic within Influence Activity, I am suggesting it takes on two distinct forms: coercion through the application of hard power (air strikes, drone strikes, surveillance, missile attacks); and coercion through the act of persuasion (threat, menace, power). Whilst the first is more explicit in its use of coercion, both entail the implementation of power to compel others towards ‘our will’. As stated in the doctrine:

Influence Activity seeks to predispose, persuade, convince, deter, disrupt, compel or coerce target audiences to adopt or reinforce a particular Course(s) of Action (CoA) (or inaction) or to assist, encourage and reassure those that are following a desired CoA, rebuilding confidence where necessary. (MoD, 2002: 2-3)

Influence Activity does not preclude military logic then but, rather, subsumes it into the rhetoric of persuasion. This of course is problematic - as will become evident throughout this chapter – because within military logic consent becomes conflated with coercion, choice with force, which, in turn, obscures that wider contradictions apparent in the strategization of war as persuasion (Rose 2001; Holmqvist, 2013). This is perhaps best articulated through the second logic: marketing logic.

Marketing Logic

Drawing on the perceived successes of social marketing techniques in influencing non-commercial behavior (such as drink-driving or smoking cessation) Helmand et
al (2007) contend that one of the most useful tools through which to shape and influence attitudes and behaviors in military activity (particularly of indigenous populations in conflict zones) is through the application of business marketing practices. In their report ‘Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation’ they argue that the marketing practices of audience segmentation, customer satisfaction and branding have specific utility in influencing the motivation of specific behaviors in local civilian populations. In particular, they state that ‘products’ can be better created, designed and disseminated in a way that will have salience and meaning for intended ‘customers’, tailored to manage ‘customer’ expectation and ‘branded’ with a clear and unique identity that becomes associated with attractiveness.

Of course there is much to critique here not least the conceptualization of civilian populations within conflict zones as ‘consumers’ whose acquiescence is represented as ‘customer satisfaction’. In this way, marketing logic assumes that populations (as consumers) are operating within a ‘choice’ framework despite the socio-political-economic inequalities of conflict scenarios that may deny civilians ‘choice’. It is here in particular that we see the inimical positions apparent in the application of military and marketing logic (choice versus force, consent versus coercion) collapsing in the rationalization of influence.

It is noteworthy that there have been a number of critiques of the Enlisting Madison Avenue approach within the defence community (see Tatham & McKay in particular).1 But, most fail to recognize the problematic contradictions inherent in the application of marketing principles per se to a non-consumerist, essentially coercive environment, choosing instead to focus on an appraisal of the methodological approach. What prevails then is the idea that marketing logic (branding especially) is not only applicable to the engendering of influence in the battle space environment but fundamental to its application.
Media Logic

It is with the above in mind that I now want to turn to the last of the logics (although not the last in significance): media logic. Whilst communication is conceived in broad terms in Influence Activity (symbolic, substantive, mediated, non-mediated) it has at its core a logic of media that is also inherent in most conceptualizations of mediatization. In Altheide and Snow's original terms, ‘media logic’ refers to how media production processes have ultimately led to a specific way of interpreting social affairs (Altheide and Snow 1979; 1991; Mazzoleni, 2008):

Media logic refers to the assumptions and processes for constructing messages within a particular medium. This includes rhythm, grammar, and format. Format, while a feature of media logic, is singularly important because it refers to the rules or "codes" for defining, selecting, organizing, presenting, and recognizing information as one thing rather than another... Media culture is produced by the widespread application of media logic. Specifically, when media logic is employed to present and interpret institutional phenomena, the form and content of those institutions are altered. (Altheide, 2004: 294)

Whilst some suggest this definition emphasizes format (Hjarvard, 2008) others claim that the vagueness of the definition is open to multiple interpretations (Lundby, 2009; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999).

Here I wish to avoid technologically deterministic definitions of media logic by moving beyond notions of format to include a broader orientation to interaction and institutional behaviors situated within particular historical, social and institutional contexts. Here media logic is conceived of as a way of seeing and interpreting, producing and presenting the world. This guides the content, structure and organization of action and communicative action in the contemporary conduct of war and defence practice. Media has thus become fundamental to the planning and execution of war conduct from intelligence gathering, cyberwar and simulation training to Influence Activity and the measurement of its effectiveness, where military practices are consistently responding to the temporal and spatial configurations that media processes generate beyond notions of format. Thus
whilst we can see the application of media logic in format terms, we can also see it an encompassing orientation to action (see also Couldry, 2008; Hepp, 2013).

Lastly, within the definition of media logic employed here I also include what Stromback & Esser, (2009) term a commercial logic. It refers to a logic of competitiveness that is a hidden but guiding principle in the operationalization of media logic, a principle that both follows and adapts to the commercial market (see also Landerer 2013). In making this claim, Stromback and Esser are referring primarily to the formats, processes and routines that conform to the logic of ‘the’ media. This has utility here with regard to understanding communicative influence activities that employ a media logic associated with, for example, news formats (storytelling, visualization, narrative etc) that are in direct competition with the communicative influence activities of other political and military actors such as an adversary. But the principles of commercial logic have additional value here beyond those applied to format because they enable us to understand the orientation of influence activity where media logic and marketing logic converge in their articulations of competitiveness, audience-orientation and a linear rationale (Landerer, 2013). If as Stromback and Esser (2009) suggest, commercial logic – or what I re-interpret more broadly as marketing logic – is a ‘guiding principle’ in the operationalization of media logic it therefore informs the wider orientation to influence that is both marketing and media centric.

The use of narrative is a good example of this. Narratives have become central to the communication of influence because they are persuasive, explanatory and compelling, enabling the construction of shared meanings, in relation to the past, present and future (Miskimmon et al, 2013:2). In format terms narratives also conform to the grammar and form of media logic (storytelling, metaphor, personification and inference) and are consequently more easily disseminated through a ‘variety of traditional and new media’ (MoD, 2012:2-12) where news values still dominate in the selection and reproduction of stories (Miskimmon et al, 2012:10). But beyond their format, narratives also form an overarching framework in which all political and military action (symbolic, substantive, mediated and non-
 mediated) becomes guided, cast and produced (Freedman 2006: 379; MoD, 2012: 2-10). Thus, an understanding of the media logic of narratives – and indeed all influence activities - cannot be restricted to format alone but must also incorporate the ways in which a particular reality of the ‘defence world’ is constructed through the logic by those operating within it and how this is oriented to media processes. It is here, in the consideration of media logic as the catalyst for such processes of mediatization (Lundby, 2009; Mazzoleni, 2008), that we move towards a better understanding of the mediatization of war and defence.

The Mediatization of Influence Activity

Media logic in this context is revealing of aspects of the mediatization of Influence Activity from both the institutionalized and the social constructivist tradition. The institutionalized approach to mediatization refers specifically to the degree to which society and the institutions within it increasingly submit to, and are dependent upon the media and their logics, where the media have become ‘integrated into the operations of other social institutions, while they also have acquired the status of a social institution in their own right’ (Hjarvard, 2008:113). In other words, the activities of institutions are increasingly performed through and with (the) media. As I have previously argued nearly all military action is organized on the basis that actions – and their consequences - may be communicated, exposed, enacted through media because of the diffuse and unpredictable infiltration of media in defence practice and everyday life (Maltby, 2012b).

In addition however, as I hope will become clear, we also see elements of the social-constructivist approach to mediatization in Influence Activity. This approach examines how the communicative construction of reality is manifested within certain media processes and how, in turn, reality becomes constructed in and through communication (Hepp, 2013; Krotz, 2009). Mediatization here refers not only to the meta-processes of media change but also the micro-processes that affect human actors and their social relations (Krotz, 2012: 36).
Thus, Influence Activity is not just about the integration of media into its operationalization. It includes an all encompassing orientation to the communication dimension of activities informed, enhanced and transformed by the growth of media influence; where even non-influence, non-mediated activity assume media form. We see this, for example, in the military’s conceptualization of ‘Presence, Posture Profile’ (PPP). Here, every from of military activity must take account of the impressions that may be generated (communicated, mediated) by the mere presence of military forces (Presence), how that presence manifests itself in terms of demonstrating or communicating intent (Posture) and how this contributes to the construction of a particular image of military activity in influence terms (Profile). If, as the military contend, ‘perception is reality’ and perception is constructed through communication, then ‘their’ reality and the social relations that inform it is also fundamentally informed by, and constructed through communication.

Both of these approaches (institutional and social-constructivist) allow us to take a more general approach to the critical analysis of the interrelations between changes in media and communications and the changes in culture and society. In attempting to apply these two different approaches to understanding the mediatization of military Influence Activity, I hope to not only examine what (and how) the practice of Influence Activity is attempting to achieve but also why this is the case in relation to a particular understanding of the social, cultural, political and economic world in which war and defence is enacted globally.

It is with regard to this latter investigation – the whys – that we can more usefully locate and interrogate flows of power that become located in the what Hepp (2013) terms the ‘moulding forces’ of media. To do this, I want to unravel the central tenant of Influence Activity - which is to effect change - through the notion of imagining. I draw upon the idea of imagining here because of its simplicity and utility in disentangling the utopian, idealized manner in which the philosophy, practice and doctrine of Influencing Activity is conceptualized primarily as tangible, controllable, predictable.
IMAGINING INFLUENCE?

So what do I mean by imagining? At the most basic level, I conceive of imagining as an orientation to something that is essentially unknowable or unknown because it has not yet been experienced; we imagine what 'it' will be like, what she will say, how he will react because the scenario itself has not yet happened. Within this unknowable state, and critical to what imagining ‘is’ are three key elements that are especially relevant to the discussion here.

The first is to envisage future scenarios of which one has little or no prior knowledge. Thus the act of imagining has a predictive element that helps us think about how we might plan for or mitigate against future scenarios that we have not yet experienced. This aspect of imagining, as an orientation to the world, is especially relevant to a discussion of defence practice per se because of the rise of anticipatory security measures in response to 'new', unpredictable threats. It is also relevant in discussions of influence practice where tools of predictive analysis (of the behaviours of others, and the effects generated by influence) are increasingly coming to the fore. But it is especially relevant to the philosophy of Influence Activity that attempts to prepare, shape and mobilize the expectations and anticipations of ‘others’ through communicative action. In this sense, Influence Activity is akin to Grusin’s (2010; 2011) premediation where particular forms of action and interaction are enacted to shape the affectivity of the public and prepare them for possible future actions that may not have seemed possible previously. Combined then we see an imagining in both the practice (pre-mediation, predictive analysis) of Influence Activity, and its central tenant; that influence will indeed cause ‘effect’.

It is with this in mind that we can also locate the second element of imagining which is the dream like, utopian quality that the act of imagining can possess. It is in this aspect of imagining of Influence Activity that we can locate the idealized notion of what Influence Activity is and what can be achieved through it, namely generating
effect, an issue I shall return to at the end of the chapter but which runs throughout the entire conceptualization and application of influence.

Lastly, the third and perhaps most important aspect of imagining is the ways in which the act of imagining draws upon existing knowledge and experience in order to envisage, formulate and plan for possible outcomes in unknowable scenarios. To imagine here is to *assume something* about the world on which to base our imaginings. These assumptions, and the prior knowledge on which they are based may be flawed or fanciful but they help us to think about how we might best orient our actions to achieve our own aims. It is with regards to this latter aspect of imagining that the following considers in more detail *how* the practice of Influence Activity is imagined with specific (again imagined) populations in mind.

**Imagining Audiences?**

If we take as our starting principle that social reality is built upon social actions that are oriented toward others, and that ‘others’ are determined by the knowledge of what is considered ‘other’, then the identification and classification of influence audiences as ‘others’ is a good place to start the analysis. It points to the mediatizing processes in which influence - as communicative action - is situated. The ways in which the military interpret and attribute meaning to their own actions, and the actions of others is by becoming an object of their action (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1967; see also Maltby, 2012b). In effect, they ‘take the role’ of ‘others’ to interrogate their actions from the point of view of those ‘others’ in order to gauge how their actions may be perceived and understood, and thus effectively designed.

The ways in which this process of ‘taking the role’ is formalized doctrinally and in military practice is through Target Audience Analysis (TAA). It consists of an analysis of an identified target audience in order to develop an ‘intimate’ understanding of an audience’s various characteristics including their accessibility, vulnerability and susceptibility to Influence Activity (Tatham and Le Page, 2014:10). Through this process, audiences become classified, typically with generic
classifications (international, regional, local) but also with classifications based on a perceived status within a group ("leaders", "key influencers") or an ontological or political status ("vulnerables", "uncommitted" or "die-hards"). The distinction between these audience groups is especially important to the design (and communication) of the Influence Activity because the perceived (or actual) response of the audience(s), and the implications of that response for the objective, determine the on-going communicative action.

It is within the scope of TAA however that I would suggest there are particular imaginings that become evident in the various assumptions attached to the process. The first is the assumption that it is possible to comprehensively access, identify and strategize information about the behavioral and attitudinal characteristics of ‘others’ in a scientific, systematized manner, often in cultural unfamiliar settings. Inherent within this is an assumption that the resulting data and analysis will be impartial and objective despite the distinct power relations that inform the context in which it is being gathered. This can be illustrated through the identification of the ‘women’ as a target audience in Afghanistan (Best, 2009; Brazier, 2014), an identification that was founded upon assumptions regarding the position of women within Afghan culture as those oppressed and excluded from power building processes (Haugegaard, 2009; see also Maltby, 2010). From these assumptions, direct correlations were made between the empowerment of women (through Influence Activity) and the stabilization of Afghanistan. I would suggest however that this is a particularly solipsistic orientation to audiences that is fundamentally problematic in its use of (hypocritical) Western interpretations and, in turn, assumptions, about the uncomplicated rise of power among women in any culture without consequence. This is an ethical point (and one that remains unexplored in military accounts) that is revealing of power flowing through the TAA process.

Thus, despite recognition that audiences should be defined and classified in accordance with how they might define ‘themselves’ (Tatham & Le Page, 2014) what actually emerges from TAA is a flattening of individuality, and an assumption of homogeneity, that denies ‘intimate understanding’ despite efforts to achieve it.
The example of women in Afghanistan is also revealing of the second – related – assumption which is that the data and analysis process is not undermined by the instrumentality of the influence objective (which generates the need for TAA in the first place). In other words, the objective for which this information is being sought destabilizes the ability to gather and interpret it without prejudice. With Afghan women for example, whilst they were ‘understood’ through a subjugated gender positioning, they were also identified as key power brokers and influencers within their own communities and thus categorized as those who could uniquely contribute to the facilitation (through others) of assistance to NATO forces, whilst dissuading conscription into the Taliban (Haugegaard, 2009; Spencer, 2009). In this instance, an ‘understanding’ of the oppression of Afghan women becomes defined in relation to, and instrumental to the achievement of, the tactical objective rather than in the multiple and complex ways in which women’s social, economic, political, and personal circumstances may be experienced and lived.

The same was true of the “vulnerables” who were identified as young men fighting age, considered to be especially vulnerable to recruitment by the Taliban because of low levels of subjective well being, lack of economic and social prosperity and disillusionment with the political climate in Afghanistan (Best 2009; Spencer 2009). Here, whilst defined according to perceived attitudinal, behavioral and circumstantial characteristics, the identification and classification of ‘vulnerables’ – and the rationalization of their classification as a ‘target’ – was chiefly founded on tactical NATO objectives to increase support for NATO activities by providing security and economic prospects through ‘legitimate’ means thus preventing conscription into the Taliban. The aim is prioritized in this classification rather than a comprehensive, complex and ‘intimate’ understanding of the audience itself. In short, the imagining in TAA is founded upon a belief in an objective and independent understanding of the audience, which, in reality is conflated with and collapsed into the influence aim.

When we combine all these imaginings it becomes apparent that it is inherently difficult for the military to ascertain with any certainty who comprises the audience
they are orienting their actions towards, despite the practice of TAA. And this is where the audience is most explicitly an ‘imagined’ one. Correspondingly, there will always be those who remain unimagined but who may in fact be the most effective in, or disruptive of, the achievement of an objective. All of this culminates in the design of communications that may only be meaningful to the communicator precisely because audiences do not recognize themselves within the communication, or because they only recognize themselves as an imposed ‘construct’. It is through this process of TAA and the emanating communication itself that we see the epitome of what I mean by ‘imagining’ of influence, an imagining that constructs an ideal, imagined interpellation and enactment of influence whilst real, lived experience of the audience at whom it is directed remains unknown.

**Imagining Through, In and With Media**

Within this context media enters into the conduct of communicative action in the ways in which Influence Activity is conducted through the collection, interpretation and redistribution of information and communications through and with media. As Knoblauch suggests, communicative action implies, assumes and depends on the production of material carrier (be it a written letter, spoken word, computer screen) that becomes instrumental in the action and in turn has ‘effects’ on and in the world (2013:302). In Influence Activity, one of the dominant material carriers is media, including as stated earlier, radio, leaflets, mobile telephony, SMS, and digital and social media. Communication in, with and through these media is considered particularly effective by the military because it enables non-co-present communication with multiple, mass, distanciated populations often in volatile scenarios where co-present interaction can generate considerable risks for civilian and military personal alike. Yet, these material carriers are not merely a medium for dialogue or the communication of particular ‘messages’ in influence activity, they are also utilized for the gathering, analysis and redistribution of intelligence data. In radio for example, the incorporation of ‘audience interactivities’ simultaneously generates opportunities for influencing audiences through ‘dialogue’ (phone ins and SMS), and intelligence gathering (via mobile phone numbers, demographic details
etc). Similarly, engagement on twitter allows for the messaging and surveillance of target audiences including the surveillance of ‘others’ with whom ‘target’ audiences engage (Venhaus, 2014).

This use of media is especially revealing of how media becomes instrumental to the flows of power, where the automation of surveillance (Jansson, 2013) through communicative action reveals a collapsing of military logic with (or into) the already applied marketing and media logics inherent in influence. Thus, the material carrier (radio, SMS, digital media) becomes especially instrumental (in Knoblauch’s terms) not only in the communicative act but in the ‘effects’ that generate a particular ‘power of communication’ (Reichertz, 2009, cited Hepp, 2013) involving the enforcement of will (although it is noteworthy that I use this term here to describe a more explicit intent in the enactment of power than Reichertz). The coercion inherent in military logic is not overt in this enforcement of will, nor is there any certainty that it will take ‘effect’, but the communicative act is inflected with power precisely because it arises from the imbalanced power relations where the distinctions between consent and coercion become especially blurred. The imagined audience member is simultaneously both subject to and the subject of the communication and coercion subsumed into the rationalization of influence via the material carrier. It is in this ‘power of communication’ that the moulding forces of mediatization become especially apparent, where technical information infrastructures create possibilities of influence and secure the flows of power (see Hepp, 2013).

**Imagining Effects: Fetishizing Communications?**

Critical to all of the above processes of course is the intention to generate ‘effect’ through the communicative act. The generation of effect in this regard is not only contingent on the enactment of communicative action through media, but also because of the media through which it is enacted: radio, SMS, leaflets, digital and social media. Media in this sense become seen as distinctive in its ability to ‘do’ something to the audience and the social relations that inform the communicative
act. We see this for instance in the conceptualization of ‘Now Media’ (MoD, 2012), the term used in defence to describe the effect of media rather than its character. But it is exactly this type of reification of media in Influence Activity – that in some way is separated from the human action that appropriates particular media for particular purpose – that provides the rationale on which influencing activity is founded, where effect is conceived of as having a material existence that is tangible, observable and quantifiable. And of course, without this, the fundamental premise of Influence Activity would be flawed. But it is here that I suggest there is another level of imagining taking place.

To develop this point I want to consider in more detail how the military attempt to ascertain and measure the ‘effect’ of influence activity to draw attention to the diffused, unpredictable and unknowable nature of ‘effects’ and thus the ways in which they may be ‘imagined’. This is important, because the consequences of a simplified orientation to influence ‘effects’ in Influence Activity becomes revealing of how a ‘defence’ reality is manifested within certain media processes and how, in turn, this becomes constructed in and through media communication (Hepp, 2013; Krotz, 2009).

The term used to describe the process whereby influence, or a particular influencing activity is measured in terms of its effect (changes brought about by influence activity) and effectiveness (the degree to which influence actions are wholly responsible for the changes) is known as ‘Measures of Effectiveness’ (MOE). Drawing on the principles of marketing logic, MOEs are more specifically focused on measuring attitudinal and behavioral change among target audiences. Whilst attitudinal change is seen to inform behavioral change in most instances, the difficulties of measuring attitude accurately through opinion polls, surveys or simply talking to audiences, coupled with the difficulties of correlating this accurately with predictable patterns of behavioral change have meant that behavior has increasingly become a foregrounded measurement. This is perhaps best illustrated in Mackay & Tatham’s (2011) notion of behavioral conflict (see also
Tatham, 2013). Here, it is argued that effect is entirely possible to measure because it is tangible, observable and indisputable. As Tatham stresses:

Either a behaviour exists, or it does not. It may reduce or increase, but it is measurable. If the campaign is to grow less poppy, you can visibly see if that campaign has been successful from the air. If the campaign is to encourage greater use of, for example, Highway 611 (the major north-south route that goes from Lashkar Gah to Sangin in Helmand, Afghanistan) by private cars (thus fostering a feeling of security), you can easily measure road usage with a few strategically placed motion sensors. (2013:42).

On the one hand Tatham is right in his claim above, behavior is observable and thus measurable. On the other hand, his example does not illustrate the processes by which Influence Activity has generated the behavior. Instead, correlation is assumed to mean causation in isolation of other, potentially influencing, factors. But, this example is reflective of a general orientation to MOE that foregrounds rules of approach rather than offering a specific indication as to how actual ‘effects’ can be quantified or qualified (see for example MoD, 2002; NATO, 2011; Tatham, 2013; Blackmore, 2003, Tatham & Le Page, 2014). Most of these approaches specify the importance of establishing a prior indicator of an ‘effect’ to measure, derived from an in-depth understanding of the target audience group and their existing behavioral patterns. Without TAA then, any measure of effect is doomed to fail. Once again audiences become critically implicated, not just in how the desired ‘effect’ is conceived and formulated, but also how it is measured. But more importantly, the need to identify an effect to measure and, in turn, a system through which to measure it, is revealing of the extent to which the measurement determines the ‘effect’. In other words, the design of the influence activity becomes contingent on it being measured and measurable and thus the process of measurement (which it itself is unstable) determines the specificity of the intent.

It is in this orientation to MOE that debates within political and military circles focus on the process by which ‘effect’ can be measured, not around the potential (im)possibilities of measuring effect, or even whether ‘effect’ can be generated. And, of course, this focus on measurement is necessary because the entire practice of influence has to be measureable in order to be legitimated, rationalized and funded.
What results however is a prioritization of the communication – because it is measurable - in such a way that the purpose, intent and practice of influence activity becomes reasoned and justified. This is especially important because the audience, in effect, become absent and influence activity gets locked in to a system of one dimensional communication based on the assumption that everyone is listening, watching or responding and that this, in turn, is indicative of behaviors or behavioral change. The dialogical communicative relationship is thus replaced with a monological one where the flows of power are correspondingly uni-directional (see also Jones & Baines, 2013).

Despite the positioning of the audience as critical to the enactment and measurement of influence then, it is in fact the belief in the power of communicative action in, through and with media that is prioritized. And there are (perhaps unsurprising) parallels here with other forms of military activity, specifically kinetic, that aim, direct and fire military power in a uni-directional manner. The trigger is pulled, the rocket launched, the bomb dropped and something, presumably, has changed. But the only tangible measurement of change is in the act of pulling, launching and dropping because multiple and diffuse effects that may have been generated at the target source (and beyond) are unquantifiable. This analogy resounds with the embedding of military logic in the orientation to influence activity, where the desire to implement will overshadows any real tangible knowledge that this has actually occurred. As stated in the doctrine, Influence is concurrently a philosophy, a capability and a process (MoD, 2012: 1-3) and thus conceived of, simultaneously, as a form of power and a means through which that power can be enacted and realized.

In MOE terms, this translates into a fetishization of media communication where media, communication and effect converge in the conceptualization (and measurement) of influence, and where the communicative act itself becomes some measurement of effect and effectiveness. As Blackmore argues (2003) it is media analysis that continues to provide a primary source for MOE as technology and corresponding analysis techniques develop in complexity. Again we see this through
the use of *Sentiment Analysis*, a social media data mining technique predominantly used in the commercial and marketing sector. It involves the use of linguistic and textual assessment techniques to classify sentiments, often into the categories of positive, negative, or neutral (see Kennedy, 2012:435; Andrejevic, 2011; Arvidsson, 2011). Whilst critics of Sentiment Analysis argue it is unreliable as a methodological tool by virtue of its simplification of complex human expressions and emotions, the defence community is increasingly incorporating Sentiment Analysis into their MOE practices (Venhaus, 2014). In this, and other methodologies, indicators of success thus become constructed from the communication itself, and perceived failure of ‘effect’ understood as a failure of communication. This is especially the case with digital media where communications (within and beyond the defence sector) have a materiality and tangibility that can be evidenced as success or failure. Not only does this confuse performance with effect, it misrepresents the meaning of digital interaction and serves to mask the power relations embedded within it (see Thornham and McFarlane, 2013; see also Hearn, 2010; Andrejevic, 2011; Turow, 2012)

As evidenced in the audience studies literature, there is huge complexity in how people understand, interpelate and respond to media based upon different situated biographies, contexts, social and cultural understandings. In short, audiences negotiate media in very different ways, with different technologies, at different times, in different spaces. Consequently, ‘effects’ generated – if at all – are as multiple and diffuse as those whom engage with the texts. As Berelson et al so eloquently claimed in the fifties: ‘*Some kinds of communication, on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions, have some kinds of effects*’ (1954:356). The convergence of media and effect in MOE circumnavigates these complex and dynamic interactions in, through and with media. And, it is through the simplicity of this formulation that we see a leaning towards a utopian ideal, imagined vision of MOE - and in turn influence – as tangible and effective. The ‘effect’ in this sense is not the ‘effect’ of the influential activity per se, but rather the reification and institutionalization of media in the
strategizing and rationalising of influence activity as a means through which to effectively conduct war.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mediatization, as an emerging grand theory of media influence (Hepp, 2012; 2013; Krotz, 2009; Hjarvard, 2008), helps us understand these processes, not just in terms of the emergence of influence as a form of warfare, but also in relation to the conditions in which it is enacted. It offers us a framework in which to situate the pervasive philosophy of Influence where social processes have become inseparable from, and dependent on the technological processes and resources of media to generate effects over which there is no certainty (only possibility). The military’s solipsistic orientation to the processes described above (TAA, MOE etc) reveal how, for instance, the communicative action of influence becomes bound up more extensively with what Hepp (2013) describes as a network (or networks) of action, which here become mutually reinforcing of the need for, and practice of influence. At a micro level, for example, the processes of audience identification are intensely bound up with the tactical aim of achieving influence, the processes of measuring effect intensely bound up with the communication, and all of these processes, in turn, intensely bound up with wider military and political practice. But at a macro level, these processes are bound up other processes where communicative action and influence with, through and in media are also foregrounded by other states, institutions, individuals. Influence Activity thus becomes rationalized by those who engage it because they are operating within a hyperconnected, networked, global, mediatized world in which other (multiple) actors are also engaging in attempts to influence by utilizing, monitoring, surveying and communicating through media.

In this context, the application of marketing and media logics in Influencing Activity become ‘logical’ because they are prevalent across all spheres of political, economic and social activity where information and communications through, with and in media - and technical information infrastructures that allow it – are used to generate distinct power relations by everyone involved. We should not forget of course that at the core of these combined logics - for all those who engage in their
application - is the intention to persuade. And it is perhaps here that the application of military logic in Influence Activity, with its inherent obscuring of choice and coercion in the compelling of others to 'our will' also becomes 'logical' precisely because it is subsumed into the rhetoric of persuasion. This is important because influence and persuasion are not new to military practice. Indeed they have long been recognized as fundamental to the effective conduct of warfare where acquiescence and compliance is always preferable to resistance through direct confrontation (Cimbala, 2002). But it is the influence of media technologies and infrastructures that drive the notion (among military circles) that contemporary Influence Activity is new in both form and content precisely because it is accentuated and transformed through the ‘molding’ forces of media where the conditions of all social, political, economic and cultural life have been altered. In this regard, influence becomes imagined because emergent processes of socio-cultural transformation reinforce the very act of imagining.

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**NOTES**

1 Tatham & MacKay (2012: 5) for example point out that the uniform and identifiable trajectory of advertising and marketing (to persuade consumers to buy a product) does not translate to complex and nuanced scenarios that comprise the battlefield environment.

2 There are a number of key principles that aim to guide the measurement of effect but few focus on actually how to measure. These include: prior identification of a tangible effect to measure influence; physical quantification through scientific rigor; the disaggregation of correlation from causation; the temporal measurement of effect; the assessment of effect within a given social context.