



**Andrew Mackay and Steve Tatham. *Behavioural Conflict: Why Understanding People and Their Motivations Will Prove Decisive to Future Conflict.* With a Foreword by Stanley McChrystal and contributions from Lee Rowland. Saffron Walden, UK: Military Studies Press, 2011.**

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The Canadian Forces lag behind many (if not all) our closest allies in the development of a capability which, in conflicts such as Afghanistan, seeks to bring influence to the forefront of

campaign planning and execution. While nations such as the UK, US, Germany, Denmark, and France, and NATO itself, have invested considerable resources into the development and implementation of Influence and Strategic Communication (StratCom) – think of it as “operations in the information environment” – the CF has done little forces-wide to study, adapt and adopt the concept. There are pockets of activity. The Influence Activities Task Force (IATF) at Land Force Doctrine and Training System Headquarters (LFDTS HQ) in Kingston, Ontario, stands out as a leading initiative in this emerging area of operations, but throughout the CF the concept is little known and even less studied. Every CF member should get interested in this subject matter, and quickly. To this end, I highly recommend the book *Behavioural Conflict: Why Understanding People and their Motivations will Prove Decisive in Future Conflict*.

*Behavioural Conflict* is written by two seasoned British military officers – Army Major General Andrew Mackay, who commanded 52 Brigade in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, and Navy Commander Steve Tatham, PhD, CO of 15 PSYOPS Group. The book is based on their work in preparing 52 Brigade to deploy to Helmand province. While the authors discuss previous conflicts from the Balkans in the 1990s, through Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland, Lebanon, and Gaza, to the Iraq war, it is 52 Brigade’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) deployment that provides the case study upon which the book revolves.

Mackay and Tatham collaborated to do extensive Target Audience Analysis (TAA) of the local population their soldiers would interact with. The goal was to understand the population as a group; not simply to understand attitudes but to understand motivation, and ultimately to design a campaign that would change the behaviour of that population. And the behaviour they were seeking to change? Anything with the potential to negatively impact the mission. At the same time, they aimed to prompt behaviour that could positively impact the mission. And an important part of the campaign design was to delegate to the lowest level, the soldier, the ability to apply influence based on events, activities, sentiment and circumstances at play at the time.

The results suggest significant success. Using TAA as the basis for understanding societal motivation towards behavioural change, during 52 Brigade’s deployment, it suffered 13 killed in action, or .16% deaths in relation to the size of its deployment. Compare this to the percentage of deaths in UK units in the same area of responsibility: .73%, .25%, .43%, .30%, and .38% over a series of deployments both before and after 52 Brigade’s. Overall, 52 Brigade suffered half the deaths of some deployments, and up to four times fewer deaths than others.

The fundamental premise of the book: the extant practice of influence activities in particular and StratCom more generally being a second thought, an add-on, to kinetic operations is maybe getting the whole thing wrong. According to these authors, future conflicts can be avoided or resolved by first understanding and then influencing the behaviour of the participants in a positive direction. Mackay and Tatham make a credible argument for influence-led operations of which kinetic operations are a part.

And the CF should take notice.

**Note:** 100% of the authors' royalties are given to "HELP for HEROES," a charity providing direct, practical support to wounded, injured and sick UK military personnel, veterans, and their families. See <http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/>. *Behavioural Conflict* has now become mandatory reading for all US Army Information Operations Officers. See <http://behavioural-conflict.tumblr.com/>.

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