

Welcome to JMark Services IEAA Journal!

The purpose of this journal is to provide useful information, spark professional discourse and encourage a greater understanding of the information environment in the digital age. We will also use it to provide updates on our available courses.

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IEAA Now Available as a *Pay Per Seat Course!*

Information Environment Advanced Analysis (IEAA) is a two-week, graduate level, educational program certified since 2012 by Joint Staff/J7.

IEAA is the only DoD Joint-certified course focused specifically on the seventh Joint Function: Information.

This course gives analysts, planners, and operators the analytic concepts, affiliated techniques, operational design methodologies, and operational approaches required to succeed in the Information Environment. To learn more about this course, click [here](#).

"What you learn in this course helps you move from 'existing' in the information environment to understanding the approaches, tools and habits of mind for achieving information advantage."

Capt, USAF

Upcoming IEAA Course Dates:

5 - 16 August 2024, Colorado Springs, CO

[-> Register](#)

Fall 2024 in National Capital Region
(either 9-20 Sep, 16-27 Sep, or
24 Sep-4 Oct 2024)

[-> Register Interest](#)

October or November 2024, in Australia
(by invitation only)

27 Jan – 7 Feb 2025 Colorado Springs, CO

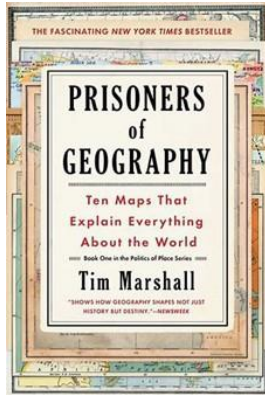
[-> Register](#)

If you have any questions in relation to the course content or participation, please contact the Senior Mentor, Stuart Purves at: stuart.purves@jmarkservices.com. For questions about registering for a course and course administration please contact the course manager at courses@jmarkservices.com.



Book Review

***Prisoners of Geography, Ten Maps That Explain Everything About the World* – Tim Marshall**



When I re-read *Prisoners of Geography* recently, I found myself simultaneously thinking that several sections of the analysis presented early in the book were overtaken by events, while also being impressed by just how prescient Tim Marshall was nine years ago when he authored the book. While it is easy to assume that the Russian invasion of the Ukraine in 2022 was driven by President Putin's megalomania and desire to cement his position in Russian history, Marshall points out that because the North European Plain continues east from Poland towards Moscow, the Russian security narrative for many centuries has been anchored on a requirement to conquer, subdue or control the lands which are now Poland, Belarus ... and the Ukraine. Marshall opens his discussion by commenting "Vladimir Putin says he is a religious man, a great supporter of the Russian Orthodox Church. If so, he may well go to bed each night, say his prayers, and ask God: 'Why didn't you put some mountains in Ukraine?'" While clearly not endorsing Putin's invasion of the Ukraine, this simple fact of geography has generated, and made easy to propagate, the deeply held Russian narrative that with Poland in NATO, and Belarus an ally, control of the Ukraine remains the final *absolutely necessary* step in securing Russia's vulnerable western border. Given the centrality of narratives in the information environment, and with the assistance of historical events such as Napoleon and Hitler's advances across the North European Plain into the heart of Russia, Putin's information machine can make a lot out of the fact that Russia is indeed a prisoner of geography.

The book is a fascinating insight into how geography has shaped politics and perceptions, and covers all of the major global flashpoints. Readers will find plenty of examples of how we ignore geography to our peril, and how we have shaped our politics, our narratives and our actions in response to the immovable nature of much of the world's geography. The analysis also adds to, or provides an alternate perspective to, our understanding of why events have occurred and will occur in the future. A good example is the impact of climate change on the Suez and Panama canals – why? – the ability for ships to sail in increasing numbers and size through the Arctic could make both canals no longer economically viable to continue to operate in the future.

We often consider that North America leapt ahead of South America due to its relative proximity to Europe and the propensity of migration from Britain and Northern Europe, as opposed of Spain and Portugal – with all of the legal, administrative, religious and industrial practices that came with those migrants. In doing so it is easy to forget that one region contains navigable rivers, deep water ports and rich soil, while the other largely does not. An abundance of these aspects of geography drive trade, communication links, population growth and to a significant extent human cooperation. An absence of them contributes to isolation, competition and stagnation, particularly when a dense jungle and mountain range splits a region in half. Hence, we have a United States and the 12 countries that make up South America. Further, these realities of geography drive narratives – the Founding Fathers chose not to call their new federation 'North America' or 'Columbia'; the word 'United' resonated. Conversely, as the South American countries gained independence, many conflicts ensued around gaining access to the few navigable rivers, coastlines, the limited arable land and basic minerals – all built around narratives of the necessity to achieve economic and territorial security.

Marshall goes on to explore how geography has contributed to European prosperity and held back African development; caused centuries of conflict between Japan and Korea; and undermined any attempts at peace and security in the Middle East. It also includes some excellent discussion on why China must control Tibet and Xinjiang. How does Beijing reconcile the narrative that Xinjiang is an integral part of China, yet the word Xinjiang literally means 'New Borders', so named after its annexation in the 18th Century – can a narrative overpower a name? I recommend this book to anyone who wants to gain a better understanding of the impacts of geography on nations and how geography has shaped national narratives.

Food for Thought



Consider the following:

A study by the University of Cambridge found that people aged 18 to 29 were worse than older adults at identifying false headlines, and the more time people spent online recreationally, the less likely they were able to spot misinformation.

In her article “Disinformation creates ‘precarious year for democracy,’ experts warn”¹, Nikki Wentling discusses work undertaken by Kurt Braddock, an assistant professor at the American University who studies extremist propaganda, to better understand how social media platforms, that lack financial incentives to moderate divisive or misleading content, contribute to media illiteracy in young adults.

“Their profits are driven by engagement, and engagement is often driven by outrage,” Braddock said.

Given that the average age of active-duty military members is 28.5, and new recruits are typically in their early 20s, Braddock advocates for the Defense Department to be consider teaching news literacy to defense members.

“They’ve grown up in the digital age, and for some it’s been impossible to differentiate what’s real and what’s not real,” Braddock said. “They’ve essentially been thrown to the wolves and don’t have the education to be able to distinguish the two. I think there needs to be a larger effort toward widespread media literacy for young people, especially in populations like the military.”

What are your thoughts – should the military be teaching media literacy, and how could it be undertaken?



How comfortable are you with the concepts and ideas that underpin “cognitive warfare”? On IEAA we discuss cognitive warfare, but focus on behavioral influence, in doing so, emphasizing that it matters only a little what people think, it matters more what they actually do. You can affect someone’s cognition all you like, perhaps they get angry, confused, excited; but at the end of the day, if they then go on about their normal business just a little angrier, confused or excited than before, we have failed to achieve an effect – a behavior change.

The Chinese have described cognitive warfare as using public opinion, psychological, and legal means to achieve victory, going on to suggest that actions in the cognitive domain will likely have a much greater effect in competition and conflict than those in the physical and information domain; although the ongoing war in the Ukraine may be tempering those views². Personally, I often grimace (although I am getting better at not so overtly showing it) when people quote Sun Tzu’s “win without fighting” as the acme of political-military success. I’m not aware of any major geopolitical change in world affairs in recent history that has occurred without fighting.

The use of force to change behavior at the strategic and operational level is an inherent part of the extension of politics with the admixture of other means, to quote another military philosopher.

Consequently, on IEAA, when we challenge students to develop end states and objectives, we encourage them to describe a desired change in behavior (or the maintenance of a desirable behavioral status quo), rather than just a change in cognition.

That said, students are pressed to build several cognition-based activities (tasks) and then link them with other activities that collectively achieve desired effects; which when grouped and focused, leads to strategic and operational behavior change. In doing so, a well-crafted line of effort should alter the cognition of an adversary (and protect our own) through the manipulation of the information environment. This then becomes one of the admixed means that contributes to the achievement of a political aim, along with the use (or threat) of force, and diplomatic and economic programs.

Are we on the right track? Or is it still possible to win without fighting by placing an overwhelming effort against an adversary in the cognitive domain?

¹ <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/extremism-disinformation/2024/05/13/disinformation-creates-precarious-year-for-democracy-experts-warn/>

² <https://warontherocks.com/2022/07/the-future-of-chinas-cognitive-warfare-lessons-from-the-war-in-ukraine/>

Please send any comments or feedback directly to:
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In November 2023, the IPR published their 4th annual “Disinformation in Society” report conducted in partnership with Leger, which surveyed more than 2,000 Americans about how they perceive intentionally misleading news or information. Topics include behavioral theories and models, combatting disinformation, organizations, media literacy materials, and fighting polarization. A very useful aspect of the report is the games and tests component, which includes interactive activities where players take on the role of a fake newsmonger, or the “Misinformation Susceptibility Test” and the “Spot the Troll” test.

The report, including the games and test, can be found at the following link and is well worth reviewing:

<https://instituteforpr.org/behavioral-insights-research-center/disinformation-resource-library/>

Professional Reading Lists

The links below take you to our reading lists, which contain books, articles and official publications that we incorporate into IEAA and use to drive professional discourse. We like to keep the lists manageable and relevant, but also encourage feedback.

[Books](#)

[Publications](#)

[Short Readings](#)

GCIAO - New Course!



The Global Competition Information Advantage Operations (GCIAO) course explores Signature Management, Digital Dust, and Operational Security in the Global Information Environment. Students will learn to plan, manage, and mitigate digital signature risks associated with all phases of operations.

Mentor-led small-group activities are at the heart of the GCIAO learning experience.

GCIAO is a five-day (40-hour) course consisting of tailored readings and a programmed syllabus of contemporary lessons, Socratic learning and mentor-guided small-group activities. To learn more about this course, click [here](#).

“GCIAO is structured to train and educate students to gain and exploit information advantage throughout the competition continuum by thinking about, assessing, planning, and designing operational approaches for exploiting opportunities and mitigating risk during fast-moving, contested “Fort to Port to Foxhole” operations. It provides tools and methodologies to seize and hold the initiative at the operational level. GCIAO thus addresses the essence of Sun Tzu’s thinking: “Victorious warriors win first and then go to war, where defeated warriors go to war first and then seek to win.”

Mike Phillips, CEO JMark Services

Please feel free to share this journal with anyone you may think would be interested. If you have received this journal from a friend and would like to receive future IEAA Journals, please email courses@jmarkservices.com to be added to the mailing list.