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**Research Guide Series**

**Psychological Operations (PSYOPS)**

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## **Psychological Operations (PSYOPS)**

The psychological effect in war has a history as long as warfare itself. Sun Tzu in the *Art of War* emphasised the importance of manipulating human behaviour, while the actions of William, Duke of Normandy, at Alençon demonstrate the psychological effect of terror. Modern Western conceptions of psychological warfare, a term that first appears in Rauschning's 1939 work *The Revolution of Nihilism*, prefer to emphasise the use of information and propaganda in carefully orchestrated campaigns with the express aims of demoralizing the enemy, undermining his will, and sustaining the morale of allies.

Though closely related to Information Operations, PSYOPs may deploy a wider range of methods that are aimed at achieving psychological effect. An important distinction to make is that though a show of force or a military action may have a psychological effect, it is not a PSYOP unless the primary purpose of the action was to influence the behaviour of the target. With the development of modern media the scope for PSYOPs has become broader. Conventional forces must now cope with the speed and reach of digital media that allow opponents to conduct their own effective information and psychological operations. As a result of the wider access to reliable information resulting from modern media, successful PSYOPs will increasingly rely on a media-related policy that emphasises the truth, rather than making use of lies and deception.

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This bibliography has been designed to provide a guide as to where to find information on psychological operations (PSYOPS). Please note that the list of references below is a selection of the more relevant titles and information on the subject. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but is an introductory guide to some of the resources available.

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The PsyWar Society: an International Association of Psychological Warfare Historians & Aerial Propaganda Leaflet Collectors  
<http://www.psywarsoc.org/>

US Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)  
<http://www.usacapoc.army.mil/>

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