

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

COUNTER-LEADERSHIP TARGETING (CLT) AND CONFLICT TERMINATION

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The question of targeting opponent leadership historically has focused on tactical and moral/legal issues. Can the leader be found? And, is it legal and ethical to attack the leader? Analysis rarely has been conducted to determine whether the targeted organization is vulnerable to Counter-Leadership Targeting (CLT) or what effect the CLT is intended to accomplish.

Organizations vary in their vulnerability to CLT. Conversely, every CLT differs in its collateral effects or unintended consequences. This hampers the targeting organization's ability to leverage the CLT's results. The failure to systematically analyze CLT's effects on the targeted and targeting organizations has resulted in confused policy and failed CLT attempts.

This thesis explores the effects of Counter-Leadership Targeting on conflict termination. Organizational theory is used to develop a model of structural and psychological variables that can be applied to the analysis of a broad range of state and sub-state systems to determine the vulnerability of a specific organization to CLT.

The thesis concludes that future threats to U.S. interests may have organizational characteristics that are conducive to CLT. Thus, the strategy may facilitate conflict termination, but, due to the volatile nature of CLT, it should be deliberately incorporated into a campaign plan only after careful, systematic analysis of the target organization. Initiating such a strategy without systematic analysis could lead to an overly risky venture with potentially high negative effects.

DoD KEY TECHNOLOGY AREAS: Command, Control, and Communications, Other (Command and Control Warfare)

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