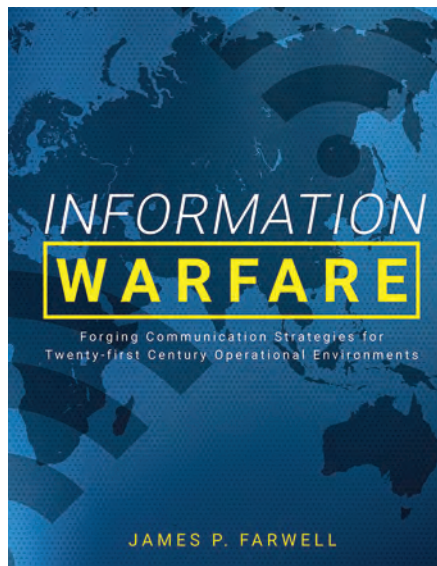


intent, drive, positioning, force composition, and growing capability is critical prior to any potential conflict.

For those interested in a deeper dive on China's role in Great Power competition, consider *Red Star Over the Pacific* (Naval Institute Press, 2010) by Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, and *The Great Wall at Sea* (Naval Institute Press, 2001) by Bernard Cole. Another terrific resource for current information on Chinese maritime and other military efforts is the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

One reasonable critique of this work is that McDevitt misses an opportunity to contextualize Chinese maritime expansion against the backdrop of a coordinated and aggressive nonmilitary expansion of Chinese influence across the globe, particularly in Africa and Southeast Asia. However, within its maritime area of focus, *China as a Twenty-First-Century Naval Power* is packed with detailed insights and should be on the shelf of every warrior-scholar in the joint force. JFQ

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Information Warfare: Forging Communication Strategies for Twenty-First Century Operational Environments

By James P. Farwell

Marine Corps University Press, 2020

178 pp. Free to Download

ISBN: 978-1732003095

Reviewed by Christopher Paul

What is communication strategy? What steps should defense leaders and planners take to build such a strategy? Curiously, in James Farwell's *Information Warfare*, he answers the second question without ever answering the first. Farwell seeks to provide "a concise treatise on the steps for developing and implementing a communication strategy and includes key historical and contemporary examples for deeper insight." The book includes 12 chapters, most of which are insightful. The book does not end with a traditional chapter of conclusions, but it does include a useful "Winning Communication Strategy Workbook" as a terminal appendix.

The principal strength of *Information Warfare* is its practicality. The material is approachable and presented with great efficiency—the book is only 178 pages, and 30 of those are the workbook appendix. Farwell lays out good first principles

for any kind of strategy, beginning with being clear about what you are trying to accomplish. After reading this book, the reader will be much better prepared to think about and plan a communication strategy in support of military operations or campaigns. The workbook is a useful addition as it lays out numerous questions that will guide users around pitfalls and toward strategic success.

Among other strengths is the excellent use of historical examples. Farwell presents historical vignettes with just enough detail to situate the reader and then immediately proceeds to distill lessons from the examples. This is made even more powerful by repeatedly returning to some of the same vignettes in later chapters, adding another layer of historical detail and drawing additional lessons. These bite-size bits are perfectly suited to purpose and avoid the risk of overwhelming the reader with lengthy historical accounts before making the point clear.

Information Warfare also has some significant weaknesses. This is not a traditional academic work and so it lacks many of the academic trappings, for good or for ill. Farwell includes more than 20 historical vignettes, ranging from the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE through contemporary operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria. These are not presented in any discernable order, and there is no clear rationale for the selection of the cases and no announced method for how the lessons were extracted. In fact, there is no discussion of methodology at all. What analysis there is draws from the author's experiences and the narratives of the historical vignettes. That said, the lessons are compelling and have face validity; Farwell offers good advice.

Farwell also uses several different terms related to the subject at hand and does not distinguish between any of them. These include the clearly related but probably distinct "information warfare," "communication strategy," "strategic communication," and "narrative." He evinces disdain for the definitional gyrations of academics and insists that they not be allowed to "obstruct the clear thinking required for effective information warfare strategy

development.” Farwell may decline to offer definitions on purpose to avoid unwelcome distractions, and in many ways his argument implies that “communication strategy” is no different from just “strategy,” and that a strategy that is not (or does not include) a communication strategy is doomed to fail.

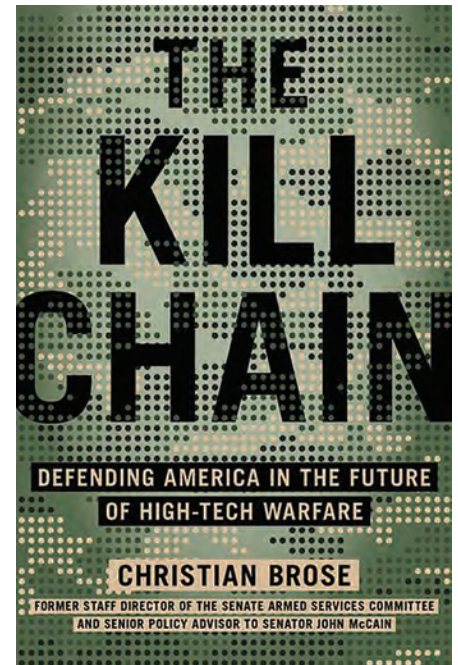
Information Warfare also includes too many competing organizing principles. The titles of the 12 chapters offer one thematic and topical breakdown. The introductory chapter has a numbered list of seven “key factors,” only one of which corresponds to a chapter (the chapter on measuring effectiveness). The next chapter begins with a bulleted list of seven “key steps,” only two of which are duplicative of the first list, with only one represented by a chapter (again measuring effectiveness). Chapter 6 provides a checklist for building a strategy, which is a great idea. However, the checklist includes 24 characteristics, with no clear mapping to the chapter topics or either of the earlier lists of seven. It is not that any of these elements are *wrong*, per se, but there is some redundancy and some things that are not deserving of the same level of priority. There is strength in consistency and parsimony, and these inconsistent listings represent a missed opportunity.

The workbook that occupies the final sixth of the book is still useful despite some shortcomings. It includes 13 sections, and each poses a series of questions, leaving lines for the user to record their answers. All the questions stem from ideas found in the book, and all are probably good questions for planners to ask. But, like the rest of the book, there is no organizational consistency. Several of the chapter titles appear as section headings, but not all of them, and not in the order in which the chapters appear. Sections do not follow the two lists of seven from the first two chapters but include some elements from both lists. The checklist is not part of the workbook, and few of the checklist elements are included. I do not believe a fully completed workbook would satisfy all 24 checklist requirements. It is a shame that the workbook

does not include, or at least directly complement, the checklist.

Bottom line: *Information Warfare* is worth the read. Planners and staff across the joint force, not only those responsible for communication or information, will find useful insights that will immediately benefit the strategies and plans they develop. Readers beyond the joint force will also benefit from Farwell’s thinking about the relationship between actions, strategy, and communication strategy, as these lessons are applicable in foreign affairs and international relations more broadly. JFQ

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The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare

By Christian Brose
Hachette Books, 2020
320 pp. \$28.00
ISBN: 978-0316533539

Reviewed by Daniel Sukman

In March, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command commander warned in testimony to Congress that China could attempt to take control of Taiwan in the next decade. In *The Kill Chain*, by Christian Brose, the former staff director of the Senate Armed Services Committee under the former chairman, the late Senator John McCain, posits that the United States is rapidly falling behind China and, to an extent, Russia, in the development of combat capabilities, platforms, and systems designed for the future of war. If this trend continues, the ability to defend Taiwan in an armed conflict against China will be increasingly in doubt.

Brose introduces the idea of the “kill chain” to demonstrate America’s misguided thinking about war and capabilities development and to illustrate how the United States is losing pace to Russia,