

# Behavioural Conflict by Andrew Mackay & Steve Tatham

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General Sir Rupert Smith, Martin Bell, untallguy: what a lineup and not one you are going to see on a regular basis. We're not on each other's Christmas card lists nor do we play Sunday League football together. What we do have in common is a very high regard for Behavioural Conflict – if you think that you may be going on operations between now and, say, 2050, read this book. If you wish to become a better professional member of the Armed Forces, read this book. In short, read the book – **now**.

The authors, Major General Andrew Mackay and Commander Steve Tatham, have subtitled their book, *Why Understanding People and Their Motivations Will Prove Decisive in Future Conflict* and this neatly encapsulates the main drive of the book: that Influence will be a key factor in future operations and that we, the British Armed Forces, do not do it well and that we need to do it better. Seeing what I see in my current appointment, I agree wholeheartedly with the authors.

In my opinion, the strongest point made is that we do not fully understand Influence because we do not fully understand the peoples amongst whom we fight. The authors' argument is that Influence is something tacked on to kinetic operations and that it should, perhaps, be the other way round – that operations should be Influence-driven and that kinetic activities are one of the functions within it. Given that I was always taught that manoeuvre warfare, irrespective of environment, was all about affecting the enemies' will, and that we need the non-belligerents in the battlespace to favour us, this makes eminent sense. In order to be able to achieve this Influence-driven capability, we need to improve our capabilities by being better educated and trained and conduct better targeting and measurement of Influence effects.

Linked to this was the notion that it is not the attitude of the people that we need to change in the short-term, it is their behaviour. In the short-term, we do not need the people (or our prospective enemies) to like us; we need them to change their behaviour towards us – eg not shoot at us, not lay IEDs, not provide money to insurgents. The change in attitude towards us can be done in slower time – the current British approach is, arguably, to

try and change attitudes.

The authors take evidence and thought processes from a number of non-military disciplines and I will freely admit that I had to re-read some passages of the book to make sure that I understood what was being said and that I followed the train of thought of the authors. This is not to infer that the book is overly complex or that I am lacking in brains (although one or two of my reporting officers over the years may have a different view). It is just that I had not been fully exposed to some of the arguments that were being put forward and that I was unfamiliar with some of the psychological theories behind them. Ultimately, it makes a lot of sense and, in a lot of areas, could be implemented cheaply and effectively, given a cultural shift in the Armed Forces.

To conclude, this is a cracking book. Irrespective of what you do in the Armed Forces, I recommend strongly that you read it. The ideas and proposals are not necessarily correct, as the authors readily admit, but they will inspire thought and debate and improve you as a soldier, sailor or airmen.

5 / 5 Mushroom Heads