Strategic Communication through Design: A Narrative Approach

A Monograph
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The United States Army needs doctrine that addresses strategic communication based upon design while incorporating existing principles of strategic communication and narrative theory together with an updated communication theory. Lack of doctrine at both Joint and Army levels results in the failure of the United States Army to synchronize strategic communication efforts within the operational and tactical levels.Understanding how to use strategic communication as an element of United States national power will aid synchronization and nesting of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Creation of relevant doctrine will provide for an enduring nature of strategic communication.

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Abstract

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION THROUGH DESIGN: A NARRATIVE APPROACH by Major Mark L. Tromblee, United States Army, 55 pages.

The United States Army needs doctrine that addresses strategic communication based upon emerging design concepts while incorporating existing principles of strategic communication and narrative theory together with an updated communication theory. Lack of doctrine at both Joint and Army levels results in the failure of the United States Army to synchronize strategic communication efforts within the operational and tactical levels.

Understanding how to use strategic communication as an element of United States national power will aid synchronization and nesting of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. In the contemporary operating environment, the Army has only communicated strategically during times of conflict. Strategic communication is necessary at all times, whether the nation is at peace or war and throughout the full spectrum of operations. Creation of relevant doctrine will provide for an enduring nature of strategic communication.

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Introduction

Since December 1941, the information environment has experienced continual change in its participants, methods and technology. This has been evident across the globe as technology continued to shrink the world. When the United States entered World War II, a majority of Americans received news through the mediums of radio, newspaper, and in news reels shown prior to movies. During the war, the public received outdated news and information. Twenty-four years later in early 1965, when United States forces initially arrived in Vietnam, televisions had become widely available; Americans could receive both audio and visual news at the dinner table every evening. By 1991, reporters from the Cable News Network (CNN) covered Operation Desert Storm live. This is an example of the rapid evolution of the transmission, reception and processing of information present in our world today. Our current information environment is comprised of multiple news networks that provide a twenty-four hour news cycle to an international audience. News feeds are available through the internet on a global scale. Social networks enabled by cell phones and the internet allow instant communication and information to mass audiences. In the midst of this technological transformation, the US Army must continually and proactively adapt to remain effective.[1]

Strategic communication is a process that allows effective use of information to support strategic objectives at the national level. The Joint Publication 1-02 definition of strategic communication is vague. It lacks accompanying doctrine in order to make strategic

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[1] Philib Seib, *Beyond the Front Lines: How the News Media Cover a World Shaped by War*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. This paragraph is a generalization from the Preface and Chapter 1.

communication actionable.[2] This results in leaders, staffs, and soldiers at all levels adopting their own workable definition and methodology for putting strategic communication into practice. Leaders agree that strategic communication is important. It is the lack of doctrine at both Joint and Army levels that results in the absence of strategic communication efforts within the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Understanding how to use strategic communication as an element of national power will aid synchronization and nesting at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

The United States Army Command and General Staff College amplifies this confusion in efforts to expose students to the concept of strategic communication. Students are currently required to participate in a weblog or blog, engage with the community, participate in a media interview and write professionally.[3] While well intentioned, these individual tasks are not mutually supportive. They ignore strategic communication as a process and simply serve as separate information engagements. Through this practice, CGSC graduates will return to units with a misunderstanding of strategic communication as a process and a concept, and underestimate its importance and value.

Misconceptions about an information war or war of ideas separate synchronization of strategic communication and other non-kinetic and kinetic operations. Leaders should appreciate the value of strategic communication as a concept and fully incorporate strategic communication within all lines of operations. In order to comprehend the importance and implications of strategic

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[2] Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, United States Department of Defense, 26 December 2006, page II-2, defines strategic communication as: focused united state efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to the advancement of United States Government interests, policies and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes and messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.

[3] William M. Raymond, CGSS Policy Memorandum Number 8, *Sharing our Story with the Nation, Command and General Staff School (CGSS) Policy for Strategic Engagements*, 12 March 2009.

communication, this monograph will explore the existing definition of strategic communication. It will examine who actually communicates strategically versus what actions at lower levels simply have strategic effects. Beyond defining strategic communication, this monograph will examine strategic communication as a process and demonstrate a need for Army doctrine to provide a framework for planning and execution of this process by examining current operations and exploring communication theory along with emerging concepts of Design.

How should the Army structure and implement a unified doctrine of strategic communication? This research will argue that the United States Army needs to include strategic communication within keystone doctrine. It should be based upon emerging design concepts while incorporating existing principles of strategic communication, along with narrative theory and a modern communication theory. The pragmatic complexity model for strategic communication, as well as tactical themes and messages, needs to effectively communicate to different audiences, providing a holistic approach to developing relevant strategic communication.

American forces have had great success at the tactical and operational levels in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Failures at all levels to engage foreign and domestic audiences to tell "our story" in a compelling manner has arguably resulted the diminution of this success. This is partially because current strategic communication efforts largely rest upon an outdated and ineffective message influence model. This monograph will present emerging theories upon which the Army might base future doctrine for strategic communication that recognizes and addresses the requirements of communicating in the complex environment faced today. The issue remains how to prepare leaders and staffs to succeed at incorporating information with military options. One of the roadblocks to this synchronization is a tendency to treat strategic communication as merely Information Operations, or even worse, propaganda. A lack of doctrine has arguably generated different interpretations of what strategic communication means as a concept and as an associated process. Without doctrine to provide a reference for the planning and execution of

strategic communication, each unit or agency has been left to decide for itself how to best

conduct strategic communication to achieve national interests. This has resulted in the promotion

of the organization's interests as opposed to strategic goals and objectives. Doctrine could

provide a way to successfully incorporate strategic communication into operations. It also

provides an effective planning process that allows for synchronization of messages with

corresponding actions in an agile and adaptable manner.[4]

While current practices of strategic communication show signs of improvement, the

process to capture and incorporate lessons learned with best practices into a doctrinal framework

is still lacking. Until now, the US Army only engages in strategic communication in an episodic

approach. Frequently the Army only attempts to communicate strategically during times of

conflict. The need for strategic communication remains constant whether the nation is at peace or

war, and throughout the full spectrum of operations. Creation of doctrine could provide for the

longevity of strategic communication. This monograph will focus on strategic communication at

the US Army level, and specifically how the Army can incorporate strategic communication into

operations. The US Army must use strategic communication in order to support national goals

and objectives through doctrine, based upon narrative theory.

This monograph will look at what the process of strategic communication encompasses.

It will explore the consequences of the failure to discuss strategic communication within current

doctrine. The study will provide the necessary framework needed to incorporate such doctrine

into capstone publications. Finally, this monograph will attempt to show the importance of

strategic communication as a mechanism the United States Army can use to employ information

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[4] James Miller, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS. Transcript in author's possession.
September 16, 2009. At the time of interview, Colonel Miller was the special assistant to the United States
Army Chief of Public Affairs.

as an element of national power. This monograph will focus on the "what" and "why" instead of the "how."

What is Strategic Communication?

> Listen closely – Speak clearly. We must listen to understand – and speak clearly to be understood. Communicating our intentions and accurately reflecting our actions to all audiences in a critical responsibility – and necessity.[5.]

The goal of strategic communication is to deliver messages to specifically targeted audiences in an effort to change or reinforce behavior in order to support strategic goals and objectives.[6] In today's environment, traditionally weaker adversaries are able to perform with increasing success owing to their ability to access large quantities of information. Rapid application of new technology to process and disseminate this information enhances the appeal of the actors able to capitalize on this advantage. A cumbersome and lengthy legal review process can often inhibit the United States' efforts to achieve the timely dissemination of information. It is crucial to understand how specific audiences process and use information in their environment when the overwhelming amount of information available through different channels saturates the public. There is a great amount of focus at the strategic level on how to incorporate new, emerging technology and media into the process of strategic communication. This new media could well augment and not replace traditional channels such as word of mouth, written correspondence, church meetings and barbershop gossip. The actual content, or intent of the message, can be lost and replaced by the perceptions of the receiver and the cultural milieu that

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[5] Stanley A. McChrystal, Eight Imperatives for Success in Afghanistan, *Military Review*, Volume LXXXIX July – August 2009 No. 4, page 136.

[6] Steven Boylan, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS, . Transcript in author's possession. April 8, 2009. At time of interview, Colonel Boylan was the Public Affairs Officer for the United States Army Battle Command Training Program. Prior to that assignment, he was the Public Affairs Officer for the commander of Multi National Forces in Iraq.

shapes his understanding. Audiences often misinterpret the actions of an Army as national policy

when the two diverge. In many cases, perception does in fact equal reality in the eyes of the

audience. Opinions can change for the majority of audiences but those audiences that will not

sway require identification early in the planning process. Knowledge empowers the sender and

gives the audience a perception of power based upon their ability to make informed decisions.

The current joint definition of strategic communication is vague and ambiguous.[7] A

comprehensive definition of strategic communication offered by the Defense Academy of the

United Kingdom is "a systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across

strategic, operational, and tactical levels, that enables understanding of target audiences, identifies

effective conduits, and develops and promotes ideas and opinions to promote and sustain

particular types of behavior."[8] The UK Defense Academy has produced a primer that provides

proven techniques and procedures for strategic communication and could be used as a model for

the United States to adopt.

Relying on this definition, strategic communication must be directed much like a

symphony. The government serves as the conductor, developing policy and directing efforts of all

agencies involved. The score the conductor uses in this metaphor is the strategic communication

plan, which outlines the desired goals and objectives. The orchestra represents multiple different

agencies or sections. In an actual orchestra, these would consist of woodwinds, brass, strings, and

percussion. In our analogy, the orchestra consists of agencies such as the Department of Defense,

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[7]Joint Publication 5-0, defines strategic communication as: focused united state efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to the advancement of United States Government interests, policies and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes and messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power. Page II-2.

[8] Steve A. Tatham, *Strategic Communication: A Primer*, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, December 2008, page 4.

Department of State, Department of Homeland Security and others. The conductor, or president as chief executive, can use these sections both singularly and simultaneously to in order to achieve a coordinated performance received by the targeted audience. Each section will compliment the other. As long as sections perform as conducted by reinforcing the sounds of another, they will achieve harmony. Internal and external audiences may receive the same message. Both audiences are of value and their behavior needs to be monitored. This analogy allows a visualization of the strategic communication process and makes it easier to understand.

Strategic communication must be proactive and flexible enough for a reactive crisis mode. It can then be used to combat misinformation from a competitor. It allows for adjustments during instances where actions on the part of United States forces do not reflect credit upon the nation or detract from stated goals and objectives. Strategic communication is not simply media interaction, a new term for information operations or commercial marketing. It is far more important and infinitely more complex than all of these. The scope and scale of potential losses or gains has far-reaching implications on strategic communication and must account for an active audience.

Strategic communication can reinforce all lines of effort with proper alignment of all messages. Daily focus on strategic communication from leadership is crucial to this active process. It is crucial that our political leadership play an active role. Terrorist organizations will build their messages on exploitation of religious and cultural themes that resonate with the target audience. They are successful in this practice within the regional local audience because they have a greater understanding of the culture, language and religion because they obviously know their own. This knowledge of the environment gives them greater credibility that a western

culture such as the United States. To combat the adversary, it is essential for United States forces to use a standard approach of strategic communication among all audiences.

Several techniques used by American forces in Iraq show that there is a level of understanding of how to use strategic communication.[9] The desire to "be first with the truth" implies that timeliness is essential in getting your message to the targeted audience to influence behavior. Not only does a message need to be the first received, it must also be above question in order to build credibility. Any perception of "spin" on the message erodes legitimacy of the sender. It is crucial to acknowledge that undesirable events will happen. It is more important to admit failures and mistakes and continue to build relationships.[10] Assumption of a level of risk in accuracy is necessary to ensure a timely release of information. Leaders may not have all the information concerning an event but the known facts require presentation in a factual manner soon as possible. To sacrifice speed in order to be perfect forfeits the advantage to the enemy. We must understand how the audience receives news, themes and messages. It is essential to determine the ideal medium to reach the targeted audience along with any potentially existing bias with both the channel and the audience. Constantly monitoring media identifies any

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[9] Christopher Poirier, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS. Transcript in author's possession. April 5, 2009. At time of interview, Mr. Poirier was the senior Information Operations Analyst for EWA and an instructor for the Information Operations Transition Course at Fort Leavenworth.

[10] Bradford H. Baylor, "Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Strategic Communication Best Practices 2007-2008, "*JCOA Journal*, Spring 2009, pages 14-24. The specific guidance from GEN Patreaus is to "be first with the truth... Get accurate information of significant activities to the chain of command, to Iraqi leaders, and to the press as soon as possible. Beat the insurgents, extremists, and criminals to the headlines, and pre-empt rumors. Integrity is critical to this fight. Don't put lipstick on pigs. Acknowledge setbacks and failures, and state what we've learned and how we'll respond. Hold the press and ourselves accountable for accuracy, characterization, and context. Avoid spin and let the facts speak for themselves. Challenge enemy disinformation. Turn our enemies bankrupt messages, extremist ideologies, oppressive practices, and indiscriminate violence against them. Fight the information war relentlessly. Realize that we are in a struggle for legitimacy that in the end will be won or lost in the perception of the Iraqi people. Every action taken by the enemy and United States has implications in the public arena. Develop and sustain a narrative that works and continually drive the themes home through all forms of media."

misinformation or events that may be out of context. Embedded reporters are of value because they provide a first-hand perspective of the event. They are able to personalize the event or story due to their proximity. Numerous factors influence audience perception and make it impossible to correlate communications related activity to actions taken or attitudes influenced.

Admiral Stavridis, commander of the United States European Command, claimed that the objective of strategic communication is to "provide audiences with truthful and timely information that will influence them to support the objectives of the communicator."[11] This statement demonstrates a failure to recognize communication as a process or dialogue. The audience is a communicator just as much as the sender of the message is. As an active process, allowances are required for feedback. Continuous modification of themes, messages and mediums may be necessary. Messages cannot be boring and simplicity is key. A simple message is easily remembered by the audience and will have a greater chance of resonance over time, as it can take generations to build relationships.[12]

Within the United States government, the main practitioners of strategic communication are the Department of State and the Department of Defense. The Department of State was designated as the lead in 2002, but it took them five years to issue a national strategy for diplomacy and strategic communication. This lack of guidance required the Department of Defense to assume the lead in the interim. As main practitioners of strategic communication, the Department of Defense and the United States Army require a doctrine with which to develop and implement strategic communication.

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[11] James G. Stavridis, "Strategic Communication and National Security," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, issue forty-six, third quarter 2007, National Defense University, pages 4-7.

[12] Boylan, interview April 8, 2009.

Strategic communication is about building and maintaining relationships. Communication of credibility and professionalism is necessary to maintain both domestic and foreign relationships. The interpretation of actions must be considered. Messages must be credible and verifiable by the intended audience. Actions must be in line with the words in order for them to be understood in the way intended.[13]

Strategic communication, as an effort to affect change within the cognitive environment, is difficult to measure in ways that are contextually relevant and responsive to ongoing requirements to change and adapt the message or the action. Consideration must first be given to how to construct a message that will be delivered to an audience, in order to have the message resonate with the targeted audience.[14] The timing of the message is also crucial. Analysis must take into account when the targeted audience is most receptive to the message. Over time, simple repetition of similar messages may result in the message becoming continual noise that is eventually ignored by the audience. In this light, a well-timed message with the proper tempo amplifies the effect of the message.

One of the difficulties of strategic communication continues to be that there is no agreed upon definition of strategic communication across the United States Government.[15] As a consequence, no universal doctrine is available. This lack of a guiding framework leaves the

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[13]Huba Wass de Czege, "Keeping Friends and Gaining Allies: The Indivisible Challenge of Military Public Relations," *Military Review*, Volume LXXXIX May – June 2009, No. 3, pages 57-66.

[14] Kevin Bergner, interview by author, fort Leavenworth KS. Recording in author's possession. June 16, 2009. At time of interview, General Bergner was the Chief of Public Affairs for the United States Army.

[15] Dennis M. Murphy, "The Trouble with Strategic Communication(s)," Center for Strategic Leadership, United States Army War College, January 2008, Volume 2-08, http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume6/september_2008/9_08_2.html, (accessed on 8 July 2009).

process and definition open to interpretation by all who wish to conduct their idea of strategic communication. Messages that are sent by actions are just as important as messages sent by visual and verbal mechanisms. Strategic communication is the process by which actors and agents can target and focus on the cognitive dimension of selected key audiences within the information environment. The overall goal of this process is to effect an audience's decision-making capability. In order for this process to be effective, it is useful to understand how information can be used within the Army. Strategic communication must reside within the realm of the commander. This emphasis permits the integration of information and actions during all levels of planning and execution.

How We Communicate

> Strategic communications (sic) will play an increasingly important role in a unified approach to national security. Department of Defense, in partnership with the Department of State, has begun to make strides in this area, and will continue to do so. However, we should recognize that this is a weakness across the United States Government, and that a coordinated effort must be made to improve the point planning and implementation of strategic communication.[16]

After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, President George W. Bush attempted to unify the nation by framing subsequent government activity as a war on terrorism. President Bush gained an overwhelming amount of public approval with 92 percent of all Americans supporting acts of retaliation.[17] During one such address, President Bush used the term "evil" five times and used twelve iterations of the word "war." By using words that were "noticeable, understandable, memorable, and emotionally charged," the President was able to

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[16] United States Department of Defense *National Defense Strategy*, June 2008, pages 18-19.

[17] Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2004, page 1.

frame this tragedy for a global audience. [18] These words combined with images that resonated with a worldwide public. The passenger planes crashing into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon evoked a global emotional response. In this way, President Bush used the twin towers as part of his message.

Opinions must be constantly monitored and gauged during the strategic communication process to determine effectiveness. This can be accomplished by monitoring local news and media. Using polls, as well as taking note of the magnitude and frequency of public activities can also be used to monitor an audience. Media coverage and presentation of events often contributes to establishing the context and frame of how these events are viewed. Journalists often skew public opinion as their motivations have a tendency to limit counter narratives. They may decide to distance themselves from a standing administration to eliminate the perception that the politicians bias them. When gauging public opinion, audiences may often have a limited attention span owing to the volume of information that bombards the public on a daily basis through different media and forums. [19]

The originator of the message must begin with a solid knowledge base of each audience, so as not to appear to be talking above or below their intended audiences. The well-used slogan "no blood for oil" was popular with anti-war activists during Operation Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. It may have caused a person to imagine soldiers fighting and dying far away from American soil to promote economic gains for those dealing in profits from

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[18] Ibid., page 6.

[19] Thomas Cioppa, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS. Transcript in author's possession. April 20, 2009. At time of interview, Colonel Cioppa was the Deputy Director of the Training and Doctrine Command Research and Analysis Center at Fort Leavenworth. He previously worked in the Office for Strategic Effects for Multi National Forces in Iraq.

oil and gasoline. This slogan assumes, often correctly, that those who receive this message value human life more than economic wealth.

In order to ascertain how specific actions are being received in target audiences, analysts may select the media portrayal and prioritization of those actions as an indicator.[20] For example, is it the lead story on broadcast news or the front page of the area's newspaper? Owing to the overwhelming amount of information available to the public in today's information environment through various sources, whether mainstream media, the internet or social networking, networks provide their customers or viewers with their "expert analysis" of the news. Audiences that accept this analysis or spin are allowing the media to define the context with which they receive and process this information.

The media is telling the audience how to interpret the news as opposed to letting the audience processes this information for themselves. The news or media is not analysis of events for the audience or a service but rather a filter of the abundance of information that sways the audiences. In the past, the so-called "gatekeepers" that would decide what may be newsworthy controlled access to media. Presently, due to mediums offering a twenty-four hour news cycle, the role of the gatekeeper has diminished because of greater access to the internet and a greater variety of channels. Now the audience has a bigger say in what they consider newsworthy.[21]

Assuming that knowledge and information are power, this pervasive media in today's society provides audiences with the illusion of making decisions for themselves. The terrorist

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[20] Thomas M. Cioppa, *"Operation Iraqi Freedom Strategic Communication Analysis and Assessment." Media, War & Conflict:* Sage Publications http://mwc.sagepub.com/cgi/content.pdf (accessed on April 6, 2009).

[21] Jack M. Balkin, "Digital Speech and Democratic Culture: a theory of Freedom of Expression for the Information Society," *New York Law Review,* Volume 7 (April 2004), www.yale.edu/lawweb/jbalkin/telecom.pdf (accessed May 24, 2009).

attacks of September 11, 2001 simultaneously prompted patriotism, anger and hatred. These raw emotions coupled with the images of the attacks provided the context for many people across America to support the Global War on Terrorism. This shows that opinions arise from media framed information.

According to the law of cognitive response, the media or message does not necessarily tell the audience what to think but they do tell the audience what to think about. Simple exposure to the message forces the audience, at least temporarily, to shift attention to the theme or message presented.[22] The American media and entertainment send a message to international audiences. Television broadcasts and movies produced provide a snapshot of values, beliefs and ideals of our culture. Strategic communication executed by the Army can be valuable in overcoming the bias presented by media that saturates the international audience. Through recognition of the law of cognitive response, the Army may be able to synchronize its actions with messages that influence behavior or opinions.

Strategic communication needs the overarching direction that doctrine and national policy can provide to assure unity of effort. In practice of strategic communication, the zero defect mentality must be eliminated. Not all messages will have the intended effect on all audiences. Conflicting messages can cause information fratricide due to a lack of doctrine or unifying strategy.[23] There must be more focus on the social and cultural human dimension in strategic communication instead of technology. We must cast the perception that the enemy and their actions are unacceptable to the local and international culture. They must not be seen as

[22] Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda, The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*, New York, Henry Hold and Company, LLC, 2001, page 28.

[23] Walter E. Richter, "The Future of Information Operations," *Military Review*, Volume LXXXIX January – February 2009, No. 1, pages 103-113.

freedom fighters. The nature of the conflict must be put in the appropriate context. Strategic communication provides this context. Actions will often speak louder than words. Commanders and staffs must utilize strategic communication within the full spectrum of operations.

Communication is how individuals and groups construct their social reality through their narrative. A sender using an effective communication process builds and maintains legitimacy with all audiences by focusing on truth and transparency in actions and corresponding messages. This trust builds relationships and networks that promote strategic goals and objectives.[24]

Communication Models: What we Hear and Why

Most efforts in strategic communication have used the message influence model that advertising companies use within the United States. There are several problems with the out-of-date, ineffective message influence model when applied to strategic communication. While it is effective within advertising, it assumes that the message conveyed the intended meaning as long as the intended audience received it. It ignores the possibility of noise or interference that distracts audiences. It falsely assumes that the audience views the sender as credible. It ignores language barriers and possible difficulties in translation. It ignores competing messages or counter narratives. It also assumes that the medium or channel is effective for the audience. It assumes that the audience understands the messages. This model does not allow for feedback. The message influence model ignores communication as a two way process with individual actors that can act upon their own free will. This message influence model is useful, however, in that it

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[24] U.S. Defense Science Board, *Report of the Defense Science Board on Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Defense Science Board, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, 4 January 2008.

portrays a simplistic view of communication. In its simplicity, it is easy to remember and allows

rapid development of messages for rapid delivery to targeted audiences.

Message Influence Model
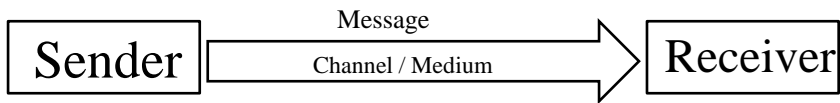
Ideally, the pragmatic complexity model will replace the message influence model. This

model recognizes strategic communication as an active process and appropriately allows for

assessment and feedback. Pragmatic complexity recognizes the overwhelming volume of

information reaching consumers within the information environment. This information modifies

behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. While the message influence model assumed that the message is

received as intended, the pragmatic complexity model understands that the narrative of both the sender and receiver play a vital role in the actual interpretation of the message.[25]

Pragmatic complexity further comprehends that not all receivers process information in the same way. It recognizes that people may process information better visually or audibly. How the target audience receives information best should have a direct impact on the medium or channel that the sender chooses to utilize to send the message. Some groups may be visually oriented and receive their information more efficiently by television. Others may process more efficiently by written or spoken word and would find print or radio broadcasts more appropriate.

Penetration of government services also plays a significant role in which channels or media are available. In areas where literacy rates are low, it would make little sense to provide messages by newspaper or leaflets. Likewise, areas that have limited electrical power or internet connectivity are not receptive to television or internet channels. While the message influence model equates receipt of a message to understanding, the pragmatic complexity model accepts that there will be interference or "noise" that affect how or if a message is received or understood as intended.

The pragmatic complexity model further demonstrates that while the targeted audience may receive the sender's message, that same audience also receives messages from several other sources over varying media that may conflict with the sender's message.[26] The audience may only truly accept a small amount of the messages they encounter based upon their narrative and perceived credibility of all the senders. Further complicating the interpretation of the messages

[25] Steven R. Corman, "A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas: From Simplistic Influence to Pragmatic Complexity," Consortium for Strategic Communication, Arizona State University, April 3, 2007, page 4.

[26] Ibid., page 8.

are barriers such as cultural understanding and errors in translation where languages differ between sender and receiver. All of these factors contribute to the possibility of the message not being received as intended within proper context and characterization.[27]

Within the pragmatic complexity model, the sender evaluates feedback from the targeted audience such as their actions and attempts to correlate impact that the message might have had on this feedback. This analysis and subsequent adjustment of themes, messages and media utilizes pragmatic complexity as an active process. While it is impossible to attribute behavior to the message with absolute certainty, identification of trends across several targeted audiences is possible.

This model allows a simple message to be easily understood and lends itself to fewer possible errors in interpretation. These messages have a greater possibility of success when they combine words and images with concrete actions attributable to the sender. The audience readily understands these messages and the credibility of the sender increases as well which promotes the relationship that much further.

The pragmatic complexity model requires a comprehensive understanding of the environment. The sender must be aware of the narrative of the targeted audiences as well as his or her own narrative. A thorough knowledge of these two elements allows the sender to appreciate many pre-existing barriers to communication or bias that may exist on part of either the sender or the receiver. Measures of performance and measures of effectiveness also require consideration so that the sender may remain active in this process. The sender must be able to recognize feedback and adjust the media or message in order to achieve the desired effect. This model does not assume success. In fact, it expects both success and failure at different stages within the

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[27] Ibid., page 11.

communication process. These differing stages are all part of the relationship building between the sender and the audiences.

Communicators learn by failure as well as success. As different cultures create their own meanings through narrative, the meaning of a message or artifact cannot simply be transferred from the sender to the receiver. Each communicator has differing values, beliefs and norms that generate their understanding of a message, word, event, image or action. Through the pragmatic complexity model, American Forces can practice strategic communication rather than global salesmanship. Continued use of the outdated message influence model will result in continued failure to affect change within key targeted audiences. If we do what we have always done, we will continue to get the same result.

Understanding narratives as a concept is key to the success of the pragmatic complexity model. Comprehension of the culture of the audience is necessary for an understanding of how they will perceive the actions along with their associated themes and messages. At a micro level, the western family can be seen as the pragmatic complexity model. While this is not strategic, it illustrates the true dynamics of communication. Each member of the family has his or own individual beliefs and norms. These help shape their narrative along with the events that they experience on a daily basis. While they may share many similarities, they each have their own distinct context that forms their interpretation of words images and actions. For example, when a parent directs a child to do something, the child may interpret the instructions differently based upon the tone of voice used, body language and their perception of the meaning of the message sent.

Pragmatic Complexity Model
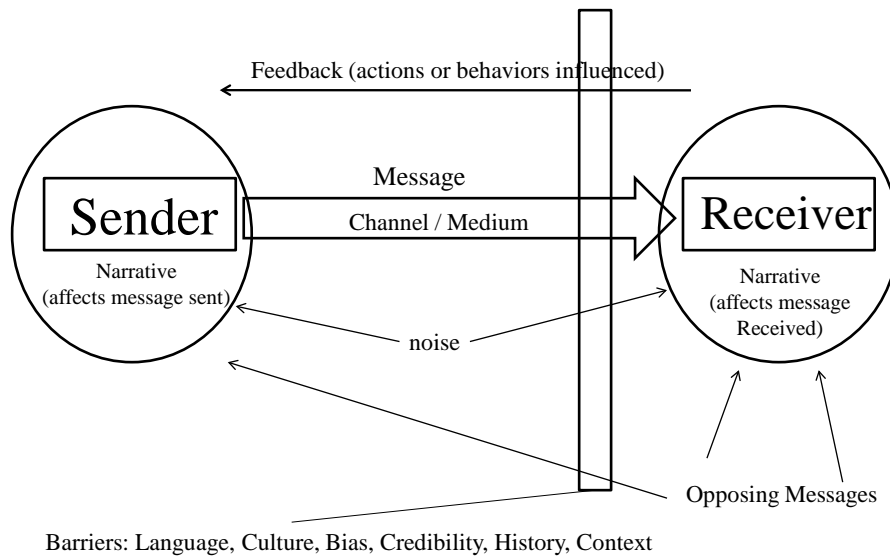
Figure 2: Pragmatic Complexity Model. Source: Based upon Steven R. Corman, *A 21st Century Model for Communication in the Global War of Ideas: From Simplistic Influence to Pragmatic Complexity*, **Consortium for Strategic Communication, Arizona State University, April 3, 2007.**

The Information Environment: Where Strategic Communication Occurs

Information has an impact in some way on every human being as well as his or her actions and the decisions that they make.[28] Doctrine together with a national communication strategy will act as a mechanism to ensure coordination between our actions, words and messages. Strategic communication must be conducted at all times, not just during a crisis. Strategic communication can act as deterrence or keep issues from rising into a crisis especially during phase zero operations. At the theater level, combatant commanders have a responsibility to

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[28] Jeffrey B. Jones, "Strategic Communication: A Mandate for the United States," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 39(4)2005, pages 108-114.

develop a theater security cooperation plan. This plan must include strategic communication as a key enabler.

The information environment is currently characterized by a constant flow of rapid communications facilitated by several different channels and media. United States forces must understand the importance of the information environment in order to preserve their influence both domestically and internationally. Currently, a lack of guidance, policy, and doctrine is limiting the ability of the United States and is simultaneously allowing our adversaries to use information to further their objectives. "Although the United States invented modern public relations, we are unable to communicate to the world effectively who we are and what we stand for as a society and culture, about freedom and democracy, and about our goals and aspirations. This capability is and will be crucial not only for the Long War, but also for the consistency of our message on crucial security issues to our allies, adversaries, and the world."[29]

Military conflict and the public perceptions of all aspects associated with it will remain within the cognitive space of all audiences. The information environment must be incorporated into intelligence preparation of the battlefield and planned for at all levels. Strategic communication must be integrated during all stages of planning and execution. Operational messages and images, often live from theater provide vital information to audiences and demonstrate how national objectives can be articulated by the military. The information environment must be fully examined in order to develop coherent strategies that facilitate the desired national end state along with associated military objectives.

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[29] *National Defense Strategy*, page 17.

THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

Physical Dimension
- Where the information environment overlaps with the physical world
- Information systems and networks
- Key characteristics: computers and communications systems, and supporting infrastructures

Informational Dimension
- Where information is collected, processed, stored, disseminated, displayed, and protected
- Dual nature - information itself and the medium
- Links physical and cognitive dimensions
- Key characteristics: information content and flow, information quality
- Where automated decision making takes place

Cognitive Dimension
- Where human decision making takes place
- Dimension of intangibles such as morale, unit cohesion, public opinion, situational awareness
- Key characteristics: perceptions, emotions, awareness, and understanding

Figure 3: The Information Environment. Source: Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, 13 February 2006, United States Department of Defense, Figure I-2, page I-2.

As shown by Figure 3 above, the information environment is comprised of three overlapping and interacting dimensions; the physical dimension, the informational dimension and the cognitive dimension. The physical dimension is where actors and agents reside and act. Structures, processes and infrastructure are all located within the physical dimension. Enablers of the information environment are objects such as radio towers, satellites and communication related equipment are located here. The physical dimension is where operations take place and

items may be targeted. This is the only dimension of the three that can truly be measured or assessed.[30]

The informational dimension is where actors and agents store, process and disseminate information. This dimension bridges the physical and cognitive dimensions together. The cognitive dimension is what strategic communication tries to affect. This is the portion of the information environment that makes judgments, perceptions and decisions. This dimension contains the narrative of each individual which shapes the context of which they view the world around them in and its events. This is the most difficult dimension of the information environment to measure, whereas the physical dimension is the manifestation of the cognitive dimension. Actions and behaviors cannot directly be attributed to activity within the cognitive dimension since there are too many unknown variables at play. This unknown can be inconsequential. According to Major General Bergner, the Chief of Army Public Affairs, we may never fully win hearts and minds and what happens in the physical dimension is ultimately of greatest value.[31] What we are able to measure and what should be emphasized are the actions that audiences take, not what we believe they think within the cognitive dimension.

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[30] Cioppa, interview.

[31] Bergner, interview.

PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

- Information shall be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by national security constraints or valid statutory mandates or exceptions. The "Freedom of Information Act" shall be supported in both letter and spirit.

- A free flow of general and military information shall be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.

- Information shall not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the Government from criticism or embarrassment.

- Information shall be withheld only when disclosure would adversely affect national security, or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Forces.

- The Department of Defense's (DOD's) obligation to provide the public with information on DOD major programs may require detailed public affairs planning and coordination in the DOD and with other Government Agencies. Such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public.
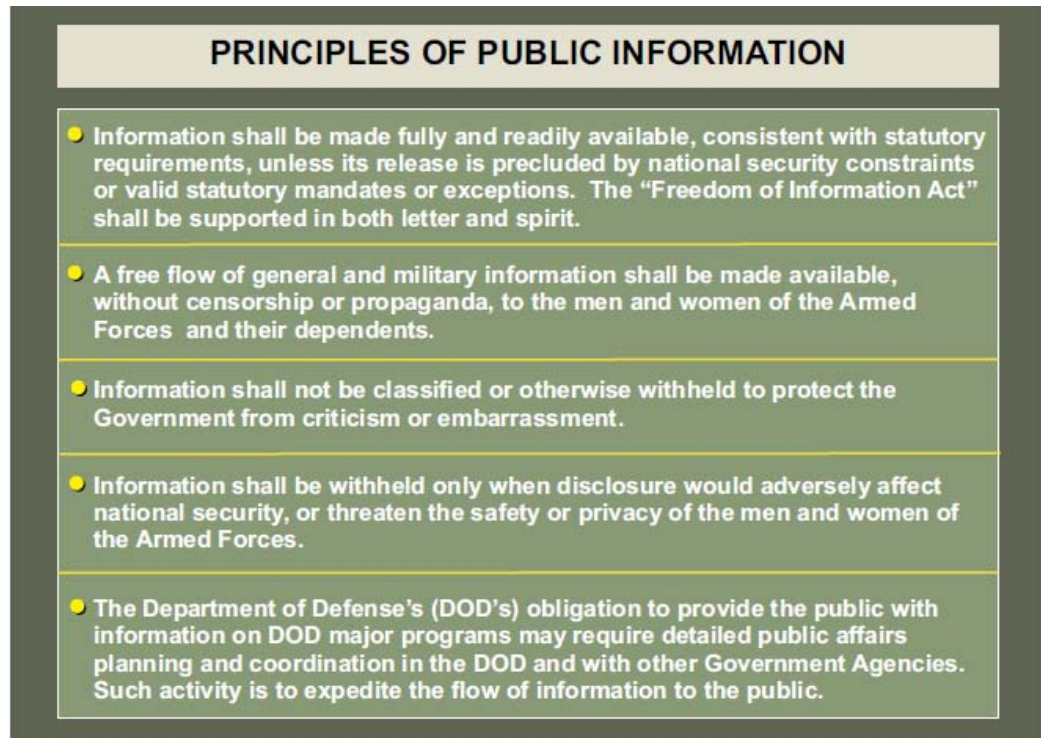
Figure 4: Principles of Public Information. Source: Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, 13 February 2006, United States Department of Defense, page II-9, Figure II-1.

The principles of public information outlined in Joint Publication 3-13, *Information Operations*, share many features with the nine principles of strategic communication. Both primarily center on being completely factual in order not to deceive and put the credibility of the Army and United States Government at risk. Strategic communication and Joint Publication 3-13 both recognize that operations must be fully synchronized with themes and messages published in support of the commander's intent and desired end state.

Information engagement is defined as "the integrated employment of public affairs to inform United States and friendly audiences, psychological operations, combat camera, United States Government strategic communication and defense support to public diplomacy, and other means necessary to influence foreign audiences, and leader and soldier engagements to support

both efforts. Essentially, Information Engagement comprises the commander's intentional use of words and images to communicate and engage with those publics and actors relevant to the success of the mission."[32]

Just as in strategic communication, information engagements must be leadership driven. This provides the focus, priority and resources necessary in order to be effective. Care must be taken to ensure that leaders at all levels speak with a unified voice in concert with United States goals, policies and objectives to reduce the risk of "information fratricide." This occurs when representatives of the United States Government give conflicting or unsynchronized facts, themes or messages. Targeted audiences for information engagement must be well selected. Some cultures may associate key leader engagement as a source of power in relationship building which is inherent to this process.

Referring to counterinsurgency or any other type of operation as a war of ideas is a misnomer. To separate the use of communication or information from kinetic or any other non-kinetic operation is to predispose one's thinking to develop an unsynchronized plan that views strategic communication as an afterthought instead of a key enabler. Since each individual interprets ideas subjectively, it is not realistic to assume that we can change one's core beliefs or way of thinking. What can be affected is how we shape our own credibility within the environment with actions and words. The conflict that is faced with varying audiences and associated narrative, is their perception.

It should not be assumed that it is impossible to control or contain information. Information can be managed effectively. Attempts to conceal or control information give the

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[32] Field Manual 3-13 *Information – Initial Draft*, Department of the Army 27 February 2009, page 6-1.

perception of deceit or a cover up. Arguably, the most successful way of dealing with damaging information is to address issues factually and in a timely manner.[33]

Marketing: Changing the Audience's Behavior

Just as consumers have the choice not to purchase goods offered by companies or advertising companies, not all audiences will be receptive to or accept messages from certain actors or agents. Reasons for not accepting themes and messages include, but are not limited to, the audience being unaware of the advantages of the service. Audiences may also be unaware of disadvantages associated with opposing messages and may distrust the sender and his lack of credibility.

While domestic advertising campaigns tend to minimize the importance of strategic communication, these campaigns are useful to explain a concept to an audience within the United States due to their familiarity. One of the greatest advertising campaigns comes from the Disney Corporation. Disney has taken a pair of simple mouse ears and turned them into an image that resonates worldwide in the international markets of broadcasting, film and travel. Images of Cinderella playing with young children while happy parents watch resonate beyond language and boundaries. Disney has made their products meaningful in a way that people can relate to and desire to be part of. As a melting pot of diverse cultures along with their associated narratives, Disney marketing to the United States consumer public shows a great example of how to be successful in strategic communication.

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[33] Boylan, interview.

Political Campaigning: Changing how the Audience Thinks

According to political scientist Brian O'Day, political campaign planning has more in common to strategic communication than product marketing.[34] A political campaign attempts to sway voters to select a particular candidate. In this respect, it is more difficult to convince an audience to align with another person than it is to convince them to buy a particular brand of soap. Even so, there are several parallels between the two. A campaign team must understand the environment within which they operate. They must develop a message that will be persuasive to the voters or audience. O'Day argues that there are three types of campaigns that will never succeed in a democracy. The first lacks a persuasive message and knowledge of the political landscape which ultimately fails as the campaign lacks direction. The second type of unsuccessful campaign may have a well thought out message, but does not have a plan for execution and delivery of this message. This leads the campaign in the wrong direction. Distracted by day to day events and reacting to an opponent's campaign they failed to allocate resources to properly execute normal operations and are unable to retain flexibility for crisis management. The third type of unsuccessful campaign is one that has a clear message and plan of execution but lacks the appropriate leadership to provide focus and guidance at the highest levels.[35] A comprehensive campaign plan is required to serve as a guide. It provides a common vision and strategy around which activities are coordinated. In its simplest form, a political campaign is an active communication process that must find the right audience, the right message, the right medium, build, and maintain credibility with the voting audience.

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[34] Brian O'Day, "Political Campaign Planning Manual; A Step by Step Guide to Winning Elections, "National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, January 2003, page 6.

[35] Ibid., page 14.

Political scientist John Zaller discussed what he calls the reception gap. It is a phenomenon he identified within a typical political campaign. Zaller contended that while voters will receive messages from one candidate, they may completely ignore messages from another based upon the views or narrative of the audience.[36] Calling Saddam Hussein the "Hitler of Baghdad" during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm evoked an emotional response as the audience recalled atrocities carried out by the former dictator of Nazi Germany. Such analogies and metaphors play directly upon the historical context within an audience's narrative. People that were alive during Hitler's period will have a much more powerful response to this image than those who were born after Hitler's fall and have only read about it in history books. Strategic communication synchronizes images such as this with the actions to reach national objectives.

United States Army Doctrine and Strategic Communication

> We must emphasize doctrine as the driver for change. You cannot cement change in the organization until you adapt the institutions. That change begins with doctrine. General George W. Casey Chief of Staff of the Army.[37]

As development of strategic communication continues, the shortfall of approved policy and doctrine complicates its planning and execution. The Department of Defense published a memorandum establishing nine principles for strategic communication of equal importance. The nine principles are: driven by leadership, credible, dialogue, unity of effort, responsive,

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[36] Pratkanis, pages 28-34.

[37] United States Army *Stand-To*, February 29,2008 edition http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2008/02/29/ (accessed on March 4, 2009).

understanding, pervasive, results-based and continuous.[38] Examining these principles provides tremendous insight to how the Department of Defense should view strategic communication. This process requires the appropriate level of attention from leadership. The leader or commander must provide a clear intent and guidance for communication. Those in charge provide an end state, which serves as a driver for all subsequent activity. The leader must ensure proper allocation of resources for strategic communication to be successful. The commander must ensure that the execution of strategic communication is complete and synchronized with all other actions and activities within the organization. Failure to synchronize creates a "say-do gap." This means that the actions that we perform are not consistent with stated policy, goals or end state. This erodes the credibility of the organization resulting in a loss of legitimacy and a lost opportunity to reach out to the targeted audience. For communication to be successful, the audience must view the sender as credible. Credibility is the foundation upon which a relationship of respect and truth are built.

Command and General Staff College policy memorandum number eight, dated 12 March 2009, discusses strategic communication requirements for students but fails to define strategic communication. Requirements for students include engaging in a media interview; speak to a community group, school, or another organized gathering of citizens; write a letter to the editor, op-ed, or article for publication or write to a member of Congress; and participate in a reputable blog. These requirements fail as strategic communication because they do not link the actions together toward a strategy or goal.

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[38] Robert T. Hastings, "Principles of Strategic Communication," Department of Defense Memorandum, Subject: Principles of Strategic Communication Guide, 15 August 2008, page 4.

The United States Marine Corps is the only service that has developed a strategic communication plan. The plan applies a targeting methodology to the audiences identified as: Marines and their families, prospective Marines and their families to achieve the goals of increasing recruiting and gaining public support. The Marine Corps has leveraged channels such as mass media, "new" media, third party spokespersons and academics to affect the behavior of their targeted audiences.[39] Army units and organizations might follow the USMC initiative and interact with a multitude of different actors and agents. This could include their own troops and families, the domestic audience, and the host nation as well as its population. These relationships are key to the success of the military forces conducting operations. Army forces must be able to influence key audiences in support of operations as well as national policies, objectives and end states. Successful strategic communication requires a coordinated effort across all sections of the United States Government. This synchronization along with coordinated themes and messages as well as actions could allow the successful employment of information as an element of national power.

The Army plays a key role in strategic communication. Strategic communication must be incorporated into every military operation and campaign at every level. When employed effectively, strategic communication is a key enabler of other lines of effort, especially in building and maintaining key relationships. Processes and procedures should be instituted for timely release of communicated products. Complicated governmental checks and balances result in a lost opportunity for United States Forces. They are unable to take advantage of opportunities to be first with the truth and retain the initiative within the information environment.

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[39] James T. Conway, *United States Marine Corps Strategic Communication Plan*, July 2007, page 7.

Key leader involvement would provide the appropriate focus for successful strategic communication. This involvement could be facilitated by development within doctrine. This doctrine would be best served in capstone publications such as Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*. To publish separate doctrine dilutes the importance of strategic communication. It also increases the possibility that strategic communication would become a staff function as opposed to a leadership priority. The commander and staff will play a vital role in the planning and execution of strategic communication. By measuring progress the commander is assisted in his visualization, and whether operations need to be adapted in order to achieve desired objectives and end state.

Joint doctrine directs that strategic communication must be included in all planning and needs to be coordinated with Department of State diplomatic missions.[40] This doctrine does not specify how strategic communication would best support lines of effort or the best way to use strategic communication. This omission results in operational actions not being synchronized with strategic communication. Keystone doctrine does not currently examine strategic communication in depth. It currently only provides a rudimentary definition. A thorough discussion of strategic communication within doctrine is necessary to ensure it is properly synchronized and coordinates with all lethal and non-lethal military operations. Doctrine should expand its analysis of the operational environment to include elements of the narrative.

Efforts are degraded along with credibility of the military and by extension, the United States when actions and messages are not synchronized or consistent with stated goals and policy. It is imperative that the Army conduct strategic communication. The Army traditionally focuses on the extension of national policy through military means. This means that there are unavoidable second and third order effects on the economic, diplomatic and informational elements of national

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[40] Joint Publication 5-0, page II-3.

power. Combatant commanders produce a theater cooperation strategy that can have unavoidable diplomatic ramifications within the assigned region. In the economic realm military forces routinely play key and vital roles in enforcement of blockades and sanctions. Messages and statements made by senior level commanders have strategic impact both domestically and internationally within the informational element of national power. Whether planned or not, communications conducted by the Army are strategic. Lack of planning or integration of strategic communication will result in a lack of synchronization of the employment of the elements of national power.[41] To plan strategic communication as an afterthought results in a loss of effectiveness because it will not be properly resourced.

Narratives: How we see Ourselves and Others

A narrative provides the historical and social construct of an audience's perspective. Narratives allow events to be placed within time and space. They are subjective and points of view that become pervasive as they are passed from one generation, or group, to the next.[42] Narratives provide the answer of how and why events relate to one another within a culture or society.

Narratives effectively bind actions together. A narrative describes events within time and space for a particular audience. A narrative provides meaning to the message and is intimately related to the perception it generates.[43] Recognition of the counter narrative is essential. The words, images, symbols and medium must all resonate with the audience. Narratives couple

[41] Arnold J. Abraham, "The Strategic Communications Process: How to Get Our Message Out More Effectively," National Defense University, National War college Paper, 2004, pages 9-15.

[42] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation,* The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990, page 48.

[43] Ibid., page 19.

strategic communication and physical operations. The sender must understand what the audience values. Comprehension of the audience narrative allows this understanding.

Development of metrics allows analysis of our effectiveness. Opinions can change rapidly and are not always expressed freely. Effectiveness is hard to measure because it cannot always be proved that behavior changed due to the message. There are a multitude of other factors at play. The behavioral norms of the population must be understood. Polling is a technique that tries to measure results within the cognitive environment. Polling is widely considered a western construct where expression of one's opinion does not carry the risk of reprisal. It is necessary to relate the goal and objective to what is being measured. Polls are only a snapshot of public opinion within time. Trend analysis provides an accurate measure. Measures of effectiveness provide feedback from the process. Identification of the baseline is necessary before implementation. Strategic communication is time sensitive. To be successful it is imperative to be the first with the truth.[44]

Military units and organizations should have a comprehensive understanding of each audience's narrative in order to understand how their actions may be perceived. The culture, identity, social context, history and perspective must be understood in order for the sender to anticipate how the audience will interpret words, images and actions. It cannot be assumed that the audience will always have the same interpretation as the sender, nor will different audiences share the same interpretation. This complicates attempts to have one singular message that resonates with the desired effect in each audience. Acting without this understanding may result in grave misunderstandings that undermine our efforts. Communication must be viewed as a

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[44] Bergner, interview.

dialogue or exchange of ideas. To view the communication process otherwise shows arrogance and will degrade any relationship with an audience regardless of its stage.

Allowing feedback is what permits communication to be successful and relationships to grow. This creates our credibility and legitimacy with the audience. This process takes significant time. In order to measure success time must be permitted time for relationships to develop. Effective communication is recognized as pervasive, each word, image, action or lack of action sends a distinct message that may be interpreted differently by each audience. Consequences of the interpretation may be strategic and "bleed-over" to other audiences due to globalization could occur. The key is recognizing if and how our messages cause others to react. Boundaries between the strategic, operational and tactical levels are currently unclear. Strategic communication has become a thing instead of a process. Strategic communication needs to be a way of thinking.[45]

Narratives are representations of how a culture or audience tells a story and expresses its collective perception of self. It encompasses their values and behavior as well as how they portray those attributes. The culture and associated narrative are always changing in relation to contextual changes. Daily events, relationships and history constantly keep the dynamics of the narrative in a state of tension. Communicators that are attempting to affect change within an audience need to realize that all the individuals encompassed within the narrative create their own culture. Telling "our story" to an audience will not change who they are. Instead, it may provide opportunities to them to enhance relationships and learn more about themselves and what groups may have in common in the process. A sender may not cause direct change to an audience's narrative but over

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[45] Michael G. Mullen, "Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," Foreign Policy, Slate Group,http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/08/28/strategic_communication_getting_back_to_basics, (accessed on 31 August 2009).

time, relationships are built and credibility that make counter-messages or counter-narratives less appealing to the targeted audiences.[46]

Similarly, according to a United States Army doctrinal draft discussing information, a mission narrative is a "single narrative statement made by the commander, published within base plans, articulating the conditions, opportunity, key actions and payoffs associated with a particular mission."[47] This mission narrative puts planned actions, events and messages into a context that frames them within the culture of the audience. In terms of the audience's perspective, it will show how the military operations will benefit them. The narrative relates the commander's intent and end state to multiple audiences. This includes friendly and adversary forces as well as the domestic population and host nation. It essentially explains what military forces are doing but also more importantly why they are doing it. The context provided by the mission narrative shapes the decisions made by audiences in reference to the actions of military forces.

This narrative can and should change over time because the environment will change. Special attention must be paid to the counter-narrative. We must analyze how the adversary is taking their action, and what message they might use to twist the actions of friendly forces into something different than intended. Narratives serve to provide a coherent and ordered representation of events or development in sequential time. Narratives explain why events happen, but they are influenced by the narrator's assumptions of the nature of causality. Narratives are dependent on one's culture, history and experiences among other things. Narratives provide a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge. They are essentially

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[46] Poirier, interview.

[47] Field Manual 3-13, page G-4.

a story *about* a story, encompassing and explaining other "little stories." Narratives are stories that are told in order to legitimize various versions of a perceived truth.[48]

As planners arrange events in the concept of operations they focus on the key or essential tasks in our mission statement and specified tasks. Narratives ultimately seek to bring meaning to observed events and information. Narratives provide a means to facilitate understanding of the environment as we consider that we must equally understand ourselves, the enemy and the system within which he operates.

With this explanation in mind, it is necessary to consider our own narrative as well as the narrative of our enemy in order to "observe reality from outside the existing frame or paradigm" and to "step outside our own culture history and language."[49] While we can attempt to understand an audience's narrative, we can never fully understand the narrative of another due to the asymmetric nature of narratives and the cognitive boundaries that exist. Being able to equally understand the narratives of friendly and adversary actors assists in showing how perceptions, history, and social context shape the environment. By looking at different points of view when the nature of the problem is considered you can formulate what to do in order to achieve the desired system. Forces must realize that narratives heavily influence points of view and they must act accordingly in order to facilitate understanding. This establishes the organization's worldview, which assists in making sense of the environment. An understanding of all narratives involved within a system provides an understanding of the motives, needs, wants and desires of both friendly and adversary forces.

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[48] White, pages 51-53.

[49] Field Manual (Interim) 5-2, *Design (Draft),* Headquarters, Department of the Army, 20 February, 2009, paragraph 2-13.

When actors within an organization are aligned in their goals and objectives, they are able to act in concert with one another.[50] This necessitates understanding the narratives of all the actors within the friendly system. A concurrent understanding of the narrative and identity of the adversary is also required. A draft for the revised Field Manual 3-13 *Information Operations* states that the friendly narrative "create(s) the boundaries within which the (operation) plays out and is guided to the outcomes the commander deems essential to success." Likewise, "commanders must consider how their units" actions will compete against or potentially play into the adversary's narrative."[51] This doctrine demonstrates the appreciation and equal attention that both the friendly and adversary narrative must receive as organizations reach across traditional boundaries and establish boundaries that define the environmental frame. As such, narratives facilitate an equally important understanding of friendly and enemy forces.

Design: How to Communicate in the Contemporary Environment

According to emerging doctrine on Design in the United States Army, commanders and staffs must understand the environment in order to comprehend how and why audiences perceive actions and words as they do. The information environment is a complex and adaptive system that is interconnected on a global scale. Design is of great value to gaining an understanding of this environment. Using design allows an exploration of the environment within both the observed and desired systems. A critical key to these systems is the narratives of friendly forces, adversarial force, and targeted audiences. One must understand how and what audiences think, as well as how they perceive their environment and why they perceive it that way. Understanding

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[50] Mari K. Eder, "Toward Strategic Communication," *Military Review,* Volume LXXXVII, No 4, page 62.

[51] Field Manual 3-13, page A-3.

the cognitive dimension of audiences is crucial but problematic. The cognitive dimension is concerned with how individuals think, understand and make decisions. Those cognitive factors at play vary greatly across different audiences. Past success in no way guarantees future prosperity within a complex adaptive system.
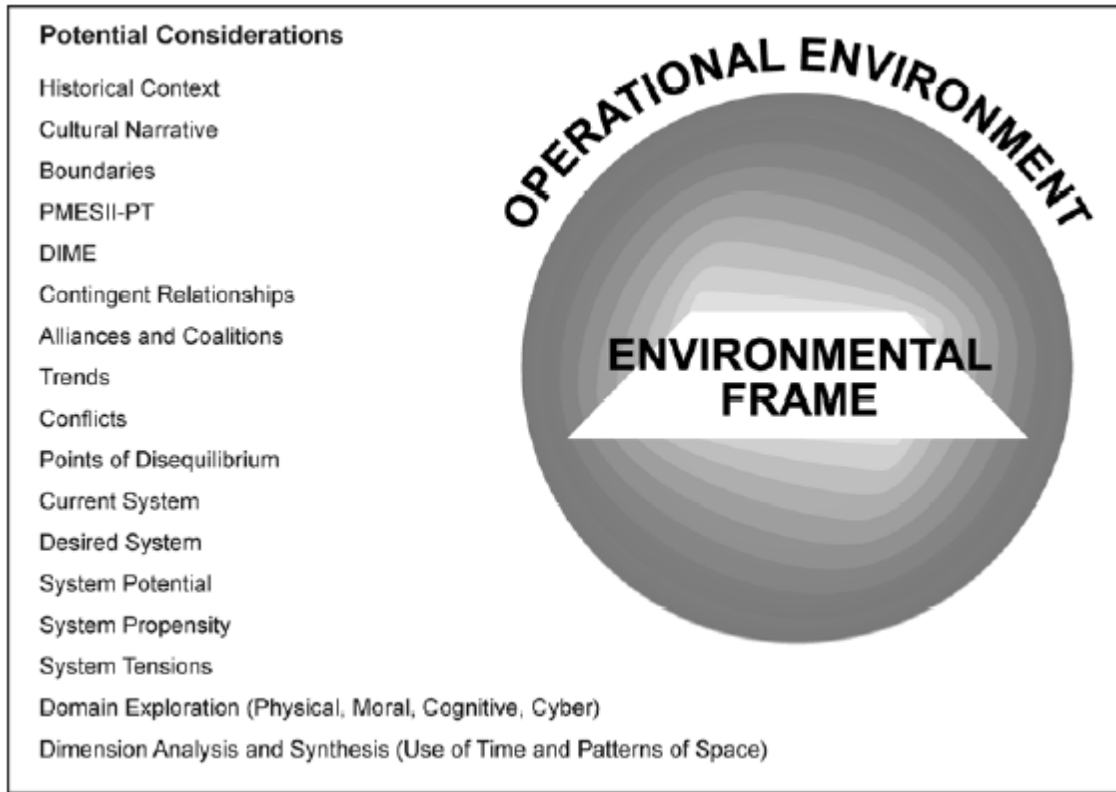
Potential Considerations

Historical Context
Cultural Narrative
Boundaries
PMESII-PT
DIME
Contingent Relationships
Alliances and Coalitions
Trends
Conflicts
Points of Disequilibrium
Current System
Desired System
System Potential
System Propensity
System Tensions
Domain Exploration (Physical, Moral, Cognitive, Cyber)
Dimension Analysis and Synthesis (Use of Time and Patterns of Space)

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL FRAME

Figure 5: The Environmental Frame. Source: Field Manual (Interim) 5-2, *Design (Draft),* **Headquarters, Department of the Army, 20 February, 2009, figure 3-2.**

Potential Considerations

a. Friendly Logic
  - System of Transformation
b. Adversary Logic
  - System of Opposition
c. Strategic Communications Logic
Neutral Actions
Select Boundaries for Action
Make Choices for Intervention
Identify Areas for Exploitation
Identify Creative Tensions
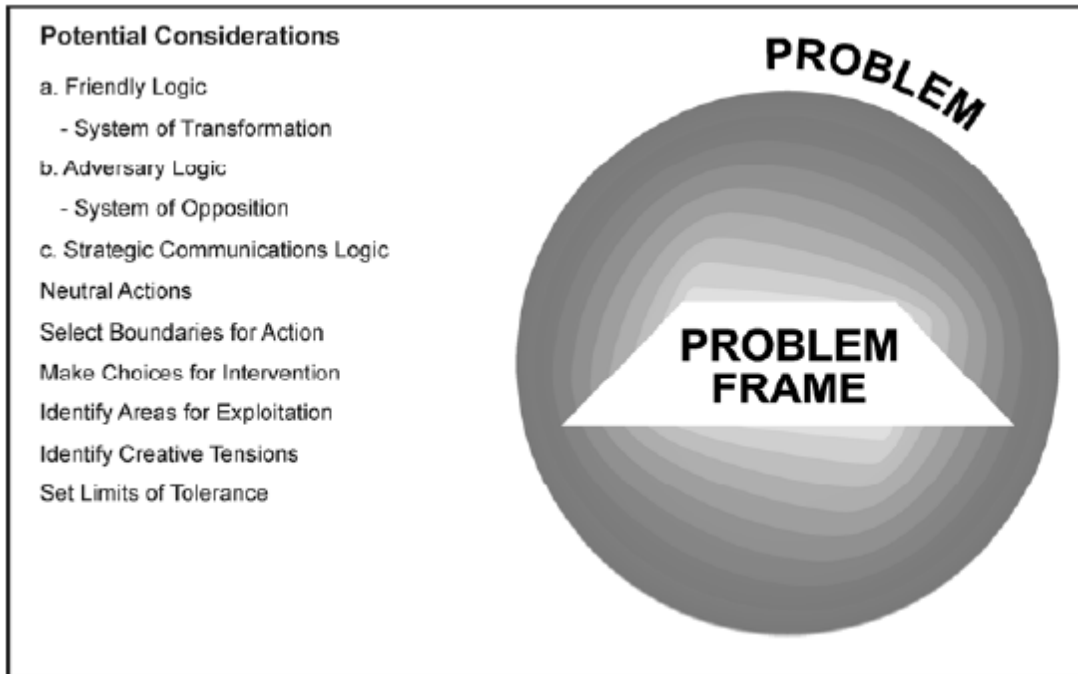Set Limits of Tolerance

PROBLEM

PROBLEM FRAME

Figure 6: The Design Concept. Source: Field Manual (Interim) 5-2, *Design (Draft),* Headquarters, Department of the Army, 20 February, 2009, page 26, figure 3-6.

The design concept views the narrative as

>…the current state, history and future goals or relevant actors within the operational environment. The most intensive effort is applied to explicating the nature of the relationships between actors. Because relationships are not objective, statements about relationships are hypotheses. Because the relationship between two actors may be multifaceted, it can differ depending on scale of interaction between time and horizon, so one way to understand its nature begins by cataloging its many aspects.[52]

The diagrams above demonstrate how narratives fit within the environmental frame of design as well as how strategic communication logic may be used within the problem frame. Use of design is beneficial in the planning and execution of strategic communication. Design recognizes the operational environment as a complex and adaptive system where strategic communicators act from within the system, as opposed to outside the system. All actions taken by

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[52] Field Manual (Interim) 5-2, *Design,* page 20, para 3-18.

the communicators inject change into the system. Narratives at play in the environment directly effect how different audiences perceive actions and messages. The environmental frame provides a mechanism through which commanders and their staffs can recognize the historical context and cultural narrative of the audiences within the system. Upon gaining an understanding of the audiences, along with identification of both the potential and propensity of the system, staffs may begin to understand and predict how audience may react to actions and messages produced during operations. Exploration of the tensions within the system show potential points for military intervention for United States Army forces within the system. Comprehension of the narratives involved in relation to the potential and propensity of the system provides analysis of how agents and actors may react and offer opportunities for exploitation as well. It can permit subsequent development of measures of performance and measures of effectiveness in order to gauge success or failure.[53]

Design lists strategic communications logic as a potential consideration of the problem frame. However, there is no definition or explanation of exactly what strategic communication logic actually is anywhere within this document or any other doctrinal publication. There are both advantages and disadvantages to this omission. The advantage is that the lack of explanation results in the planning staff having freedom of thought in their interpretation of what this concept is. This allows the development of unbounded ideas within the system. However, the marked disadvantages of this omission far outweigh the advantages. Lack of a definition often results in answering the "wrong problem." A clear definition of what strategic communication logic is would provide necessary direction to planners. This would facilitate their development of a

[53] Since Design is still emerging within United States Army Doctrine, this, along with many other claims in this section are observations from three design practicum conducted by Seminar 9 of the School of Advanced Military Studies Class 09-02.

problem frame that identifies areas for intervention within the limits of tolerance. It would also ensure that the resulting solution space and desired system are within the commanders end state and intent.

Lessons from the Contemporary Operating Environment

Adversarial Approach: What we can Learn from our Enemy

Terrorists and other adversaries are using common communication tools more effectively.[54] Non-state actors are not necessarily constrained by the law of war. The United States chooses to abide by moral imperatives in to remain above reproach based on their standards of right and wrong. The United States has not organized a comprehensive or efficient process to employ strategic communication. At its very core there is still confusion about exactly what strategic communication is, let alone what needs to be communicated and its presentation to various audiences. Adversarial communication efforts cannot be ignored. To do so forfeits momentum and credibility to their cause. While it is not possible to stop the adversary's communication, it is possible to counter or mitigate their effects in some instances when the United States is able to act in an appropriate and timely manner.[55]

Insurgent forces are able to achieve success where United States forces are failing. Adversarial misinformation must be countered quickly and it must include proof of the facts within the response. Strategic communication actively seeks to degrade the messages, ideas, actions, and themes of the adversary. Insurgents are quick to release messages to undermine United States forces. This exploits coalition failures and turns it into an insurgent success. United

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[54] R.S. Zaharna, "Al Jazeera and American Public Diplomacy: a Dance of Intercultural (Mis-) Communication, *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media,* Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, CO,2005, pages 183-187.

[55] Boylan, interview.

States forces take three to five days to approve and release a theme or message. This amount of time creates an information vacuum that the adversary fills with themes, messages and actions promoting their goals and objectives.[56]

Terrorist networks are using strategic communication to spread propaganda, recruit personnel, raise funds, train elements, and coordinate and plan attacks. In today's information environment, terrorists are able to operate freely. While the United States Government has the best of intentions, there is no doctrine to guide the Department of Defense or United States Army as one of the lead strategic communication practioners. Strategic communication is how the United States will regain soft power using information.

In a counterinsurgency, public opinion is often the center of gravity.[57] We must continue to try to examine how the adversary attempts to leverage the population. The internet provides a window through which the adversary's use of information can be viewed. Adversaries do not necessarily play by a set standard or code of conduct when constructing themes and messages. They will often fabricate stories out of half-truths or outright lies to discredit friendly information engagements or actions.

The adversary currently communicates from within the community instead of from the outside. Credibility is gained by delivering on promises and letting actions speak for themselves. The United States must be able to listen better if we are to understand the needs and hopes of the culture. Since we are no longer trying to win the hearts and minds of the public, we need to

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[56] Andrew Garfield, "The United States Counter-propaganda Failure in Iraq," *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2007, http://www.meforum.org/article/1753 (accessed on 28 March 2009).

[57] Cori E. Dauber, "The Truth is Out There: Responding to Insurgent Disinformation and Deception Operations," *Military Review*, Volume LXXXIX January – February 2009, No. 1, pages 13-24.

engage them with strategic communication. Strategic communication is what our actions communicate instead of how we communicate the message.

Best Practices: What We Have Learned

Strategic communication must be a command priority. While the executive branch will determine a comprehensive, whole-of government strategy, the United States Army must incorporate strategic communication into their lines of effort and prepare for its execution.

The key is to convey the facts without distortion. The rationale of the actions must be provided with an account of the event itself. The marriage of the message and action links the action to the overall goal or strategy. Army headquarters are a key implementer of public diplomacy, public affairs and international broadcasting services, as well as information operations. An approach is needed that can be easily adapted and flexible while remaining responsive in order to achieve desired effects. Bad news or information must not be suppressed. To suppress this information will lead to perception of a cover up to the population and erode credibility.

Messages and stories must be accurate as well as be placed in the right context along with proper characterization. More importantly, the news must be verifiable by the target audience.[58] This provides credibility and will allow relationships to be established and maintained. A February 2008 poll in Iraq showed that only seven percent of the population regularly used the internet. The majority of the population received the preponderance of their news from television

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[58] Bergner, interview.

broadcasts.[59] Media monitoring allows erroneous stories and misinformation to be identified.

These falsehoods must be found quickly so that corrections may be made. Timeliness is

paramount within all strategic communication. A delay of hours may drastically reduce

credibility and provide an opportunity for an adversary to take advantage of the information

environment. We must currently ask ourselves if "we are doing things right?" and if "we are

doing the right things?" in order to gauge our effectiveness.

There must be a results-based approach to strategic communication with unity of effort.

Agents and actors should operate within a system, not a vacuum. Our communication needs to be

centered upon achieving a clearly defined end state. Strategic communication is continuous;

whether planning, executing or assessing. Leaders and staffs must remain diligent in reaching

targeted audiences. In addition, strategic communication must occur in times of peace and

deterrence as well as during times of crisis. The Department of Defense lists the final principle as

"responsive." A better characterization would be "timely." To be responsive suggests a lack of

proactivity.[60] We cannot forfeit initiative to the adversary in the information environment. This

would give momentum to the enemy and squander opportunities for United States forces. While a

crisis response strategic communication plan must be available, it should supplement and not

replace a proactive strategic communication plan to target key audiences.

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[59] Thomas M. Cioppa,: "Operation Iraqi Freedom Strategic Communication Analysis and Assessment" *Media, War & Conflict ,*Volume 1 Page 28,Sage Publications. http://mwc.sagepub.com/cgi/content.pdf, (accessed on April 6, 2009).

[60] Miller, interview.

Leadership-Driven
Leaders must lead communication process

Credible
Perception of truthfulness and respect

Understanding
Deep comprehension of others

Dialogue
Multi-faceted exchange of ideas

Pervasive
Every action sends a message

Unity of Effort
Integrated and coordinated

Results-Based
Tied to desired endstate

Responsive
Right audience, message, time, and place

Continuous
Analysis, Planning, Execution, Assessment

Figure 7: Principles of Strategic Communication. Source: Hastings, Robert T., *Principles of Strategic Communication*, **Department of Defense Memorandum, Subject: Principles of Strategic Communication Guide, 15 August 2008, page 3.**

During the Cold War, it was considered acceptable for members of the military, including senior leaders, to avoid engaging the media or other key groups in the name of operational security. Due to the availability and desire for information today, there is a thirst for factual relevant information that is readily available through military leaders. Failure of key leaders to engage the media surrenders initiative and advantages to the adversary in the information environment. If the need for factual information from our friendly forces is left unfilled, it will be met by information from adversarial forces that advance their objectives.

Instead of waiting for the media to interpret events, the Army must provide factual accounts of operations to the audience. How we deal with misinformation is just as important as how we tell our own factual story. To leave a false story unchallenged is to prove its legitimacy and credibility. We must show misinformation as false and we have to prove it as such and then provide the truth along with its rationality.

Effective strategic communication has four key attributes; accuracy, proper context, right characterization and speed. Timeliness is the key to success. The other three attributes are necessary but insufficient by themselves.[61] Efforts that sacrifice speed for complete accuracy forfeit the initiative to the adversary and allow him to craft and distribute his themes and messages. It is necessary to assume a level of risk in order to remain effective. Efforts to release only approved messages have constrained United States forces" strategic communication efforts and reduced their effectiveness.[62] We must develop a system that permits rapid and timely messages and themes while simultaneously permitting flexibility in responses to adversarial messages at the operational level. We must get away from an episodic or crisis approach to strategic communication. Strategic communication needs to be conducted regularly in order to be effective throughout the planning and execution of the full spectrum of operations.

Since strategic communication requires a whole of government approach, several factors beyond the Department of Defense and the United States Army will influence it to include other government agencies, mass media, new media, and the private sector. All of these actors and agents have the same access to reach global audiences and affect their perception and beliefs. The United States Army should attempt to take advantage of these outlets to facilitate goals and objectives linked to the commander's intent and desired end state.

Emerging Technology: A Tool, not THE Answer

The contemporary media environment allows greater access to and reach of information. New media is a mechanism of, not the answer to, strategic communication. For example, in July

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[61] Kevin Bergner, interview by author, Fort Leavenworth, KS, June 16, 2009.

[62] Bud Goodall, "Strategic Communication and Strategic Ambiguity in the Middle East: Principles and Practices", Consortium for Strategic Communication, Arizona State University, 21 July 2006, page 9.

of 2006, Hezbollah utilized video camera features on cellular telephones to stream video to the internet. Through manipulation and control of reporters and media, as well as having their own satellite television station with over 200 million viewers, they were able to control the release of stories to the public. [63] According to General William B. Caldwell, an emphasis on information at all levels of planning gave Hezbollah a marked advantage over the Israeli Defense Forces. The Israeli Defense Forces focused on traditional information operations such as distributing leaflets and jamming the television station, Al Manar. Following this communication failure, Israel formed the Winograd Commission to learn from these shortcomings. When faced with another conflict in December 2008, Israel actually utilized a You Tube channel of their own.[64]

Technology is changing the way that some groups and cultures communicate. It is the process that must endure as technology will continue to develop exponentially. To focus on current technology limits one's vision of the future, taking the emphasis away from the relationships, and putting primacy on the medium, which is ever changing. Governments and forces must now prepare to engage with all forms of media. There is a new transparency in media created by open access to all individuals. Our culture should change in order to prepare for both failure and success in communication. There is not "one" singular correct answer.

New media has provided anonymity for individuals to publish "news" and ideas to a global audience over the internet. This allows a consequence-free environment in which actors and agents are able to distribute false or misleading information without risk of reprisal or retribution. All facts should and must be provided to the public by American forces and

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[63] William B. Caldwell IV and Dennis M. Murphy, "Learning to Leverage New Media: The Israeli Defense Forces in Recent Conflicts," *Military Review*, Volume LXXXIX May – June 2009, No. 3, pages 2-10.

[64] Ibid., pages 6-7.

leadership. Failure to make factual and timely information available to all audiences may, in some circumstances, be perceived as attempts to cover up events or deceive the public.

Emerging media provides both challenges and opportunities. The citizen-journalist has replaced the citizen-soldier. Actions that occur at the tactical level now have the potential to have strategic effects after gaining international exposure due to new media. Abu Gharib is an example of how events at a tactical level can be used by different audiences to further their objectives. Private Lyndy England and Sergeant Charles Graner acted inappropriately in their treatment of detainees at Abu Grahib and their actions were not indicative of approved United States policy. This incident of abuse, documented by the perpetrators, generated a subsequent Congressional Report concluded that then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was to be held partially responsible.[65] It is possible that this issue would have never risen to public awareness had it not been for the "trophy" photographs of two junior level soldiers. These photographs worsened public opinion for an already unpopular war, especially within the Arab world. England and Graner not only brought an issue of vital importance to light; they essentially provided damning evidence against themselves for courts martial proceedings. This is only one such case where a digital camera had a greater impact that an assault rifle.

When recording devices are not allowed, such was the case during the execution of Saddam Hussein on December 30, 2006, one individual had the potential to make a strategic impact. Iraqi National Security Advisor Mowaffak al-Rubai claimed to BBC news along with

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[65] U.S. Senate, Report of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee Inquiry into the Treatment of Detainees in US Custody Published December 11, 2008, page 9, http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/supporting/2008/Detainees.121108.pdf, accessed on May 4, 2009.

other international media that the execution was "calm, orderly and respectful."[66] This characterization was soon to be proved false. Cell phone video footage showed the grim details of the execution which had turned into a near circus. Al-Rubbia's false description of the event caused the Iraqi government to lose credibility not only within the country, but with the Islamic community as well. Regardless of what words accompanied the video footage, the pictures spoke for themselves.

Globalization and advances in communications have resulted in all messages becoming global. What is problematic is that not all audiences will interpret messages in the same way based upon their narrative. One example is the varying reactions of different actors and agents to release of photographs of the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on June 8, 2006.[67] Some members of coalition forces viewed this event as a great triumph within the Global War on Terror, as well as a success for the Bush administration. Jihadi leadership held a much different view, using these same images to promote al-Zarqawi as a martyr. Following the attack that resulted in the death of al-Zarqawi, Major General William B. Caldwell led a press conference providing details of the operation. General Caldwell openly admitted that the body had been altered by removing blood and debris in effort to make the body more presentable to the Islamic community.[68] While this act displayed sensitivity, Muslims were still outraged at the release of these photographs. It was viewed by some as a trophy of United States forces, who were rejoicing in the death.

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[66] Nik Gowing, *Skyful of Lies and Black Swans: The New Tyranny of Shifting Information Power in Crises*, University of Oxford, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, July 2009, page 54.

[67] Aaron Hess, "One Message for Many Audiences: Framing the Death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi," Consortium for Strategic Communication, Arizona State University, June 23, 2006, pages 3-4.

[68] Ibid., page 3.

In retrospect, it may have been advisable to permit the Iraqi government to issue the press release and make the final determination of whether to release the photographs. The Iraqi government would have greater credibility within the region than American forces. They also may have displayed greater cultural sensitivity in determining if release of the photographs would inflame the public. The narratives of individual audiences provided the context for receiving the message of Al-Zarqawi's death. All messages are global within the contemporary operating environment.

Information in pervasive and local messages will spread across the world. If print media or television releases a message, it can quickly be captured and spread over the worldwide web by another sender. In today's information environment, all forms of media are overlapping and interconnected. Senders must understand how their messages will be received, along with the second and third order effects of both the action taken and the frame that senders provide with the message. From one society to another, differences within narratives can result in the perceived meaning of a message or image changing due to the framing within the cultural, historical and political environment.[69]

In the current "Long War," communication with targeted audiences both domestically and abroad is necessary to leverage influence on a global scale.[70] Because of advances in modern technology, individuals have gained the same access to media that was formerly exclusive to powerful nation-states. Any actor or agent with a cellular telephone and internet access can create news, whether factual or not, and reach a global audience. The public is no longer a passive

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[69] Brad M. Ward, "Strategic Influence Operations: The Information Connection," United States Army War College Strategy Research Project, April 7, 2003, pages 29-34.

[70] Lindsey J. Borg, "Communicating with Intent: DoD and Strategic Communication." Air Force University research paper, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, April 2007, pages 5-11.

audience that simply receives information. Audiences now contribute, just as much as they gain, to media and the information environment.[71]

Owing to pervasive technology, it is no longer even possible to address one single discrete audience. Even when only a singular audience may be intended, it is unavoidable for other audiences not to receive this message. It is essential to understand that not all audiences will receive this message in the same way due to their narrative. What is even more problematic is attempts to construct the same message in several different ways. Because of the same message reaching several distinct and diverse audiences, it could create the perception of telling different things to different audiences and causing credibility and legitimacy to be lost.[72] One of the most critical parts of strategic communication is determining how to deliver the message. The media selected must have the ability to find its way intact to the audience through all interference, noise and competing messages from different senders within the environment. The "media" has taken on a different meaning as an institution in the contemporary operating environment. No longer does the media simply include newspapers, radio and television. The internet is a new battlefield in the information environment, coupled with a twenty-four hour news cycle. This has created both tensions between actors and agents as well as opportunities to gain the advantage.

Conclusion

It is well known that the information environment is constantly changing. The information environment of today is comprised of multiple news networks. These networks

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[71] Linda Robinson, "The Propaganda War," *U.S. News & World Report,* May 29, 2006.

[72] Dennis M. Murphy, "The Trouble with Strategic Communication(s)," Center for Strategic Leadership, United States Army War College, January 2008, Volume 2-08, page 2, http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume6/september_2008/9_08_2.html, (accessed on July 8, 2009).

provide twenty-four hour news to an international audience, news feeds through the internet on a global scale and social networks provided by cell phones and the internet that allow instant communication and information to mass audiences. Strategic communication describes how to best use information to support strategic objectives at the national level. While leaders at all levels agree that strategic communication is important, the lack of doctrine at both Joint and Army levels results in the failure of strategic communication efforts. Understanding how to use strategic communication as an element of national power will aid synchronization and nesting of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

The lack of doctrine yields different interpretations in the definition of strategic communication, and associated process. Doctrine provides a way to successfully incorporate strategic communication into operations and an effective planning process that allows for synchronization of messages with corresponding actions in an agile and adaptable manner. The US Army only practices strategic communication in an episodic approach. Creation of doctrine will provide for the enduring nature of strategic communication. This doctrine should be based upon design, narrative theory and the pragmatic complexity model.

The goal of strategic communication is to deliver messages to specifically targeted audiences in an effort to change or reinforce behavior that will support strategic goals and objectives. It is crucial to understand how specific audiences process and use information in an environment where the amount of information available through different channels saturates them. The perception of messages forms opinion more than the actual content, or intended perception of the message. Opinions can change for the majority of audiences. Those audiences that will not sway will require identification early in the planning process. Strategic communication must be transparent. Strategic communication is not simply media interaction or a new term for information operations or marketing. It is the process through which the Army can attempt to change the behavior of the targeted audiences.

Most efforts in strategic communication have used the message influence model which advertising companies within the United States use. It ignores noise or interference that can distract audiences. It ignores competing messages or counter narratives. It also assumes that the medium or channel is effective for the audience and that the audience understands the messages. Ideally, the pragmatic complexity model will replace the message influence model. As discussed, the pragmatic complexity model recognizes strategic communication as an active process and appropriately allows for assessment and feedback. Pragmatic complexity recognizes the overwhelming volume of information reaching consumers within the information environment. While the message influence model assumed that the message is received as intended, the pragmatic complexity model understands that the narrative of both the sender and receiver play a vital role in the actual interpretation of the message.

Understanding how the target audience best receives information should have a direct impact on the medium or channel that the sender chooses to utilize to send the message. It further demonstrates that while the targeted audience may receive the sender's message, that same audience can receive messages from several other sources over varying media which may conflict with the sender's message. The sender must be aware of the narrative of the targeted audiences as well as his or her own narrative. Each communicator has differing values, beliefs and norms that generate their understanding of a message, word, event, image or action. Through the pragmatic complexity model, United States Forces can practice strategic communication as opposed to global salesmanship. Continuance to use the outdated message influence model will result in continued failure to affect change within key targeted audiences. Doctrine and a national communication strategy will act as a mechanism to ensure coordination between our actions, words and messages. Strategic communication must be conducted at all times, not just during a crisis. This plan must include strategic communications as a key enabler.

Army forces must be able to influence key audiences in support of operations as well as national policies, objectives and end states. Successful strategic communication requires a

coordinated effort across all sections of the United States Government. This synchronization, along with coordinated themes, messages and actions, allows the successful employment of information as an element of national power. The Army plays a key role in strategic communication. Strategic communication must be incorporated into military operations and campaigns at every level. Key leader involvement provides the appropriate focus for successful strategic communication. To publish separate doctrine dilutes the importance of strategic communication and increases the possibility that strategic communication will become a staff function as opposed to a leadership priority. The commander and staff play a vital role in the planning and execution of strategic communication.

A narrative describes events within time and space by a particular audience. A narrative provides meaning and perception to the message. The words, images, symbols and medium must all resonate with the audience. Narratives couple strategic communication and physical operations. Mission narrative puts planned actions, events and messages into a context which frames them within the culture of the audience, in terms of their perspective, showing how the military operations will benefit them. The narrative relates the commander's intent and end state to all audiences, including friendly and adversary forces as well as the domestic population and host nations. The context provided by the mission narrative shapes the decisions made by audiences in reference to the actions of military forces. Narratives ultimately seek to bring meaning to observed events and information. Use of design is beneficial to the planning and execution of strategic communication. The United States has not organized a comprehensive or efficient process to employ strategic communication. Adversarial communication efforts cannot be ignored. Insurgent forces are achieving success where United States forces are failing.

Strategic communication must be a command priority. Army headquarters are a key implementer of strategic communication. Timeliness is paramount within all strategic communication. There must be a results-based approach to strategic communication with unity of effort. Strategic communication is continuous; whether planning, executing or assessing. Leaders

and staffs must remain diligent in reaching targeted audiences. We cannot forfeit initiative to the

adversary in the information environment.

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