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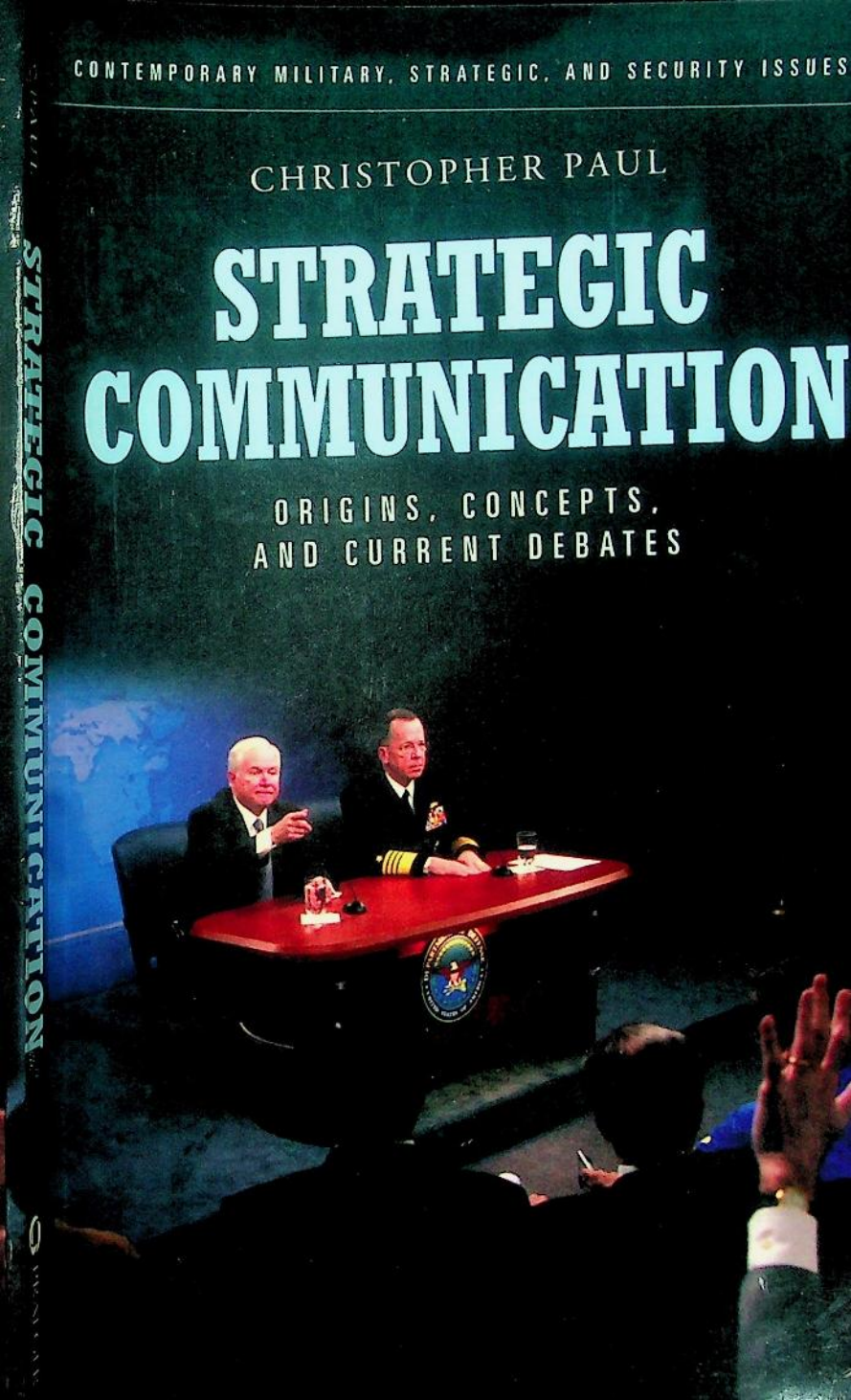
CHRISTOPHER PAUL

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

ORIGINS, CONCEPTS, AND CURRENT DEBATES



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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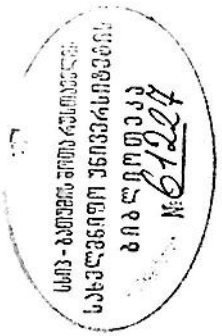
Strategic Communication

Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates

Christopher Paul



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Manufactured in the United States of America

For my daughter, Lillian,
who will grow up to a brighter future if we get better at this

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Preface and Acknowledgments

This book is intended primarily as a reference resource but can also be used as a primer. The topic of discussion is U.S. government strategic communication, an enterprise of critical importance burdened by a lexicon that is both vague and contested, and facing a host of additional challenges. This book makes clear what is contested, presents the competing perspectives, puts them in historical context, and presents the consequences and implications of adhering to each of the disparate views.

The original working title for this book was *The Promise and Peril of Strategic Communication*. While that is now only the title of the first chapter, the theme remains prominent. This work offers a clear (and hopefully compelling) vision of what strategic communication could be and the benefits that will accrue if that promise is realized, as well as making clear the dire consequences for failing to improve U.S. government strategic communication and some of the shapes such failures could take.

In addition to laying out key areas of contention and ongoing debates in strategic communication, this book makes several suggestions or observations that will help to move some of the debates forward and offers practical advice for those who are asked to *do* strategic communication while these debates rage on. No matter how deeply ensconced you are in the theory or practice of strategic communication, from complete novice to seasoned veteran, there is something here for you.

The manuscript for this book was completed in fall of 2010. I have been doing research on, related to, or relevant for strategic communication since roughly 2004. While all of that research was conducted while working for the RAND corporation and much of it was RAND project work, the views expressed here are solely mine and do not reflect the views or opinions of RAND or its sponsors. Where RAND research is foundational to thinking here, I have so indicated in the citations. I am indebted to several RAND

Strategic Communication promises a set of answers to these challenges. This book will enumerate that promise and also takes pains to spell out the peril that threatens if strategic communication is abandoned or done poorly.

The remainder of this chapter provides a starting place for our exploration of strategic communication. I begin with a starting definition for strategic communication and present what I will argue are elements of the unassailable core of any effective conceptualization of strategic communication. The chapter concludes by introducing the core themes of the book, which include both the promise and the peril of strategic communication; the relevance of all that we say and do; a characterization of the problem space as the inform, influence, and persuade mission set; the argument that the development of different capabilities in strategic communication follows a natural crawl, walk, run progression.

A final note, before beginning: this book unashamedly takes the perspective of the U.S. government in general and the U.S. Department of Defense specifically throughout much of the discussion. I am a U.S. citizen, and, more importantly, virtually all of my relevant research and experience has involved the U.S. approach to strategic communication. The general principles espoused, however, should be applicable in any national (or other organizational) context.

Strategic Communication Defined

One of the challenges facing strategic communication is the significant struggles that have occurred in trying to define it. While there appears to be broad consensus about the core of the concept, in the actual details strategic communication is different things to different people. There are broad differences in understandings of what strategic communication is and is not, particularly at the boundaries (what things should and should not be considered part of strategic communication). Many are happy to define strategic communication as they define pornography and "know it when they see it,"[3] but as I will argue in the next chapter this leads to policymakers talking passed each other, incorrect assumptions of shared understanding, and activities being labeled as part of strategic communication that many might think should be excluded. Some, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, are fed up with the term, and would prefer to do away with it.[4]

Further complicating the issue is that strategic communication is not alone in its ambiguity: there are also struggles over much of the related lexicon. The related concept "public diplomacy" is the subject of shared misunderstanding, as is the relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy. For example, some contributors use the two terms interchangeably, while

for others public diplomacy is subordinate to strategic communication, and for others still strategic communication is subordinate to public diplomacy.[5] "Information operations" is another related term suffering from misuse and misunderstanding. In fact, the lexicon relevant to strategic communication is in such disarray that I spend a significant fraction of the next chapter discussing alternate definitions and understandings of strategic communication and many related terms.

A Working Definition

For me, strategic communication is coordinating the things you do and say in support of your objectives. More formally, I define strategic communication as *coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives.* I can and will deconstruct each element of that definition in chapter 2, along with a discussion of the elements of many other offered definitions of strategic communication. For now, let it suffice to have a working definition laid out so it is at least a little bit clearer what we are talking about.

Note that this is my definition and mine alone. It aligns more or less well with some of the definitions offered by others. If you do not agree with my definition in whole or in part, that is OK. The exact definitional details do not really matter to me, nor even does the overarching label "strategic communication." The underlying concepts *do* matter, and I would be happy with any term of art and any effective definition that captures the essence of the construct and helps, rather than hinders, in actually doing what is referred to here as strategic communication.

Strategic Communication Is a Moving Target

Complicating definition (and execution, if we are candid) is the fact that strategic communication as defined and practiced in the U.S. government and U.S. Department of Defense is in a state of flux. Nearly a decade of recommendations and proposals from various studies are in the queue for consideration, discussion, or adoption.[6] As of this writing (fall of 2010), several members of Congress have drafted legislation that mentions strategic communication by name and would impact its conduct or structure if passed into law. In response to requirements included in the National Defense Acquisition Act of 2009, both the White House and the Department of Defense released reports to Congress on the status of strategic communication in the government (both are excerpted in their entirety in this book; see appendices II and III).[7] The Department of Defense has conducted a Strategic

Communication Capabilities Based Assessment, but the results have not been released as of this writing. Also at the time of this writing, the Department of Defense is conducting a high-level study on information operations and strategic communication for the fiscal year 2012 program objective memorandum process.[5]

In short, the topic is a hot one; debate is ongoing; and changes are being considered and possibly made. This book captures as much as it can of current debate but takes care to emphasize the unassailable core of what is currently called strategic communication. Even if some part of the government makes a new authoritative statement of what they intend for strategic communication to be (something I would advocate they do, by the way), or if the term strategic communication is jettisoned in favor of a less ambiguous term with less contentious baggage, the core ideas identified and the conclusions reached here will still obtain.

The Unassailable Core of Strategic Communication

Whatever you call it and whatever you choose to include or exclude at the boundaries, I believe the concept of strategic communication can be boiled down to four core elements. If a new construct or definition excludes any of these four elements, it is something fundamentally different. To be sure, an effective implementation of strategic communication will contain more than just these four elements, but they form the unassailable core of my conception of strategic communication. They are:

- Informing, influencing, and persuading is important.
- Effectively informing, influencing, and persuading requires clear objectives.
- Coordination and deconfliction are necessary to avoid information fratricide.
- Actions communicate.

In what follows, I elaborate on each.

Informing, Influencing, and Persuading Is Important

Though I made a brief and I hope compelling argument for the importance of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs in foreign policy in the introduction to this chapter, I want to repeat the point here. The first part of the unassailable core of strategic communication is the belief that it is important to attempt to inform, influence, and persuade people (domestic, foreign, adversarial) in pursuit of policy objectives. This has never been more true than it is today, in the digital age, where populations previously disconnected from U.S. foreign policy now have both an opinion and the

ability to make it heard. As the authors of a 2009 Congressional Research Service report eloquently argue:

> The attitudes and perceptions of foreign publics created in this new environment are often as important as reality, and sometimes can even trump reality. These attitudes affect the ability of the United States to form and maintain alliances in pursuit of common policy objectives; impact the cost and the effectiveness of military operations; influence local populations to either cooperate, support or be hostile as the United States pursues foreign policy and/or military objectives in that country; affect the ability to secure support on issues of particular concern in multilateral fora; and dampen foreign publics' enthusiasm for U.S. business services and products."

This applies doubly with regard to military operations. In fact, a 2008 symposium on information and cyberspace conducted at the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth acknowledges that "*success* or failure of land operations is susceptible to the perceptions of the diverse, but relevant, groups and individuals among whom the operations take place [emphasis in original]."[10] General Peter Chiarelli echoes this conclusion in an article in *Military Review:*

> Once the decision to employ the military has been made, those of us in uniform must accept that in most modern conflicts, the decisive elements of power required to prevail may, more often than not, be non-kinetic. While we must maintain our core competency to defeat enemies with traditional combat power, we must also be able to offer the populations of countries affected by war the hope that life will be better for them and their children because of our presence, not in spite of it. In other words, in contrast to the idea that force always wins out in the end, we must understand that not all problems in modern conflict can be solved with the barrel of a rifle.[11]

I agree wholeheartedly. More importantly, I think that you should too.

Effectively Informing, Influencing, and Persuading Requires Clear Objectives

This is what makes strategic communication "strategic." Informing, influencing, and persuading in support of national objectives requires both that the objective be clear and that it be clear how a certain set of audience attitudes, behaviors, or perceptions will support those objectives. I completely agree with Dr. Emily Goldman, who is currently part of the office of communication at U.S. Central Command, when she says, "Effective strategic communication requires clear, consistent core messages *that flow from policy goals* [emphasis added]."[12]

It is critical both that the objectives be clear and that the desired effect sought through communication be clear. Vague, hand-waving goals like "win

the long war" (a phrase prominent in the national-security strategy and in various defense-planning guidance under the George W. Bush administration) do not imply any observable or measureable indicators of progress, nor do they do much to allow the articulation of supporting objectives to which an influence campaign could connect.

Similarly, vague communication goals like "make them like us" are not a good example of informing, influencing, and persuading in support of national policy. "Liking" is not by itself a precise national political objective, though it could be conducive to attitudes that could enable a specific policy objective, if clearly articulated that way and connected to a plausible path of support for such an objective.

Another way to describe the desired connection between objectives and strategic communication is to borrow a page from the military and to think in terms of "information effects." If every action, message, image, or other form of signaling is acknowledged to have a possible impact on the information environment, then it becomes more straightforward to harness those impacts to accomplish intended (and clearly articulated) information effects. Without loss of generality, these objectives could be articulated to support national political intent or desired political effects as well.

Coordination and Deconfliction Are Necessary to Avoid Information Fratricide

Even if everyone in government accepts that informing, influencing, and persuading in pursuit of policy objectives (or information effects) is a worthy undertaking, and acknowledges that doing so effectively is predicated on clearly articulated objectives with communication efforts explicitly tied to those objectives, such efforts can still fail without adequate coordination and deconfliction.

While a fire-support cell has a host of different munitions and platforms to call upon when tasked with the destruction of a building, so too does a proponent of influence have many different means of communication and possible themes available. Worse for influence efforts, while any one of the fire-support coordinator's strike assets is likely to be sufficient to destroy a building in a single salvo or sortie, many instruments of influence may need to work together over an extended period before the objective is realized.

Army Field Manual 3–13, *Information Operations: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, defines "information fratricide" as "the result of employing information operations elements in a way that causes effects in the information environment that impede the conduct of friendly operations or adversely affect friendly forces."[11] When one piece of information a government or its forces provide contradicts or is otherwise inconsistent with another piece of information provided by that government, that is information

fratricide. "Since each USG agency has its own mission, each habitually targets different audiences, with different messages, through different channels. By communicating different messages to multiple audiences at home and abroad, the USG risks the perception of being seen as disingenuous."[14] Getting every possible source of messages and signals in an enterprise as sprawling as the U.S. government (or even just the U.S. military) to avoid contradicting each other is nontrivial. Nonetheless, integration, coordination, and deconfliction are central to strategic communication.

Actions Communicate

Actions speak louder than words. This truism is absolutely central to an effective strategic communication construct. Any implementation of strategic communication that includes only traditional communication, such as messaging, press releases, media relations, and so forth, is all but doomed to fail. This holds true even if it includes nontraditional media, such as Web or other technology, new media/now media (discussed further in chapter 5), and individual engagement. To be successful, strategic communication must include the communicative content and signals of actions, images, and policies.

"Actions" include not just policy actions but a much broader set of behaviors, deeds, and undertakings by members and representatives of the government. This goes double for the kinetic actions (maneuver and fires) of military forces. If a picture can be worth a thousand words, then a bomb can be worth ten thousand.

The smart thinkers in this area realize that actions communicate, and I echo their call. Whether you think of it as minimizing the "say-do gap,"[15] or wish to discuss the "diplomacy of deeds,"[16] what you *do* matters at least as much (if not more) than what you say, especially for deployed military forces. Every action, utterance, message, depiction, and movement of a nation's military forces influence the perceptions and opinions of populations that witness them, both in the area of operations (first hand), and in the broader world (second or third hand).[17] The 2010 White House National Framework for Strategic Communication gets it exactly right: "Every action that the United States Government takes sends a message."[18]

The 2010 Marine Corps Functional Concept for Strategic Communication also correctly notes that strategic communication "is affected significantly more by actions than by words or images."[19] Major Cliff Gilmore echoes the point: "Every action communicates something to somebody somewhere."[20]

Despite this obvious point, too often influence efforts or implementations of strategic communication include only media-based communications. An officer I spoke with who was involved in the strategic-communication efforts of Multi-National Forces, Iraq (MNF-I) in 2008 described those efforts as "public

affairs on steroids" and admitted that they were focused almost exclusively on news media and journalists.[21] In the military, there is a tendency for the information content of kinetic operations to be an afterthought, something which strategic communication can be used to address, rather than being recognized as an important part of strategic communication in the first place. Even in Iraq and Afghanistan, where operational outcomes unambiguously hinge on the attitudes and behaviors of noncombat populations, commanders and planners have too often come with a nearly finished plan for kinetic operations and asked information operations (IO) or strategic-communication staffs to "sprinkle some of that IO [or strategic communication] stuff" on their plan.[22] Successful implementations of strategic communication, to borrow from Edward R. Murrow, will be in on the takeoffs as well as the crash landings, and will include (and be included in) planning for kinetic and maneuver actions.[23]

Core Themes of This Book

Having offered a working definition of strategic communication and identified what I believe is the unassailable core of the construct, I now present the core themes of this book. These are the touchstones to which the discussion will return again and again. They frame much of the material that follows and ultimately develop into some of the key takeaways from this book.

The Promise of Strategic Communication

The first such theme is a motivation. If you accept that influencing in support of foreign policy goals is important, and you recognize that actions communicate, too, isn't that enough? Can't we just do that better? Why do we really need all this strategic communication stuff? *What do we get if we get this right?*

All fair questions and all answered with a vision of the promise of strategic communication. I have a vision of what successful strategic communication would look like. In this vision (and it is an idealized abstraction, to be sure), we have clearly stated national objectives, which contain nested subordinate objectives, which contain nested intermediate or supporting objectives, nesting all the way down to the operational and tactical level. These clear statements make it easy to see which objectives can be realized through influence or persuasion, and which can be supported through such efforts. In pursuit of these objectives, appropriate priority is given to influence. Not that influence is always the primary means for pursuing policy but that it is always considered for possible primacy in a policy or operation, and is the top priority when it is appropriate for it to be.

In this vision commanders and decision-makers have a "communication mindedness" and consider the messages and signals their actions, utterances,

or planned policies send. Failing that (or as that is developing) these same leaders have access to (and respect for) communication advocates/proponents/advisors who sit at their right hands and bring communication implications to their attention.

In this vision everyone in government speaks not with one voice like some kind of robot automaton but with their messages aligned in the same direction, because everyone understands the nested objectives and how their own efforts support those objectives, and because they have (or have access to) requisite communication training and cultural knowledge. In this vision appropriate themes and plans of action are developed in consultation with both those who are expert in communication and influence, and with those who have the relevant cultural and contextual knowledge. Communication is not just one-way broadcast, but is true two-way communication, engagement, or dialogue. In my vision this leads to policies shaped with our own interests as well as the interests and preferences of others in mind.

What do we get if we get this right? If we realize this vision, what we will get as a nation is maximum credibility, increased respect, and as much support for our policies and operations as possible. The promise of strategic communication is *not* that everyone in the world will love us or that we will be able to pursue inherently offensive policies without opposition. Strategic communication is not about "putting lipstick on a pig" or making the unattractive attractive. It is about explanations (preferably in terms that are comprehensible to, and that resonate with, relevant populations), about finding shared perspectives and common ground, about compromise, about credibility, about legitimacy, about partnership, about support. Strategic communication, practiced effectively, will allow us to create international support when we seek to do good in the world and to create the broadest possible consensus that what we are doing really is good. Further, when we pursue more selfish interests, effective strategic communication will allow us to be believed when we promise not to encroach more on the interests of others than absolutely necessary. That is the promise of strategic communication.

The Peril of Strategic Communication

What happens if we don't get this right? What happens if our organization for strategic communication is suboptimal or we fail to develop sufficient capabilities and processes? Or more tellingly, what happens if we get fed up with our efforts and abandon the label and the construct?

This is the peril of strategic communication. If we do not effectively organize and coordinate our efforts to inform, influence, and persuade, either because of the failure of the concept to win support or because we fail to effectively execute the concept, we will pay a dear price.

Failure could come in many different flavors. There are a host of possible execution errors, in which we try to do strategic communication but do it wrong. One of the tensions in strategic communication (to foreshadow material from a later chapter) is the level of autonomy allowed when seeking unity of message. One kind of failure would be realized if unity of message were perfect—too perfect in fact. If everyone in government was forced to memorize and repeat the exact same talking points and never stray from them, messaging would be unitary but likely also a bit ominous and lacking in humanity and individuality. Insufficient coordination, however, could produce equally poor results. If every communicator has complete latitude without being bound by themes or guidance connecting messages to objectives, then many representatives would become loose cannon in the ship of communication, in every metaphorical sense of the phrase. Information fratricide would abound, as it does now, and will continue to be the case until some kind of effective coordination and deconfliction structure is in place.

International perceptions of the United States' rejection of the Kyoto climate change accords provide a fine example of the price of continued failure with strategic communication. As a 2003 Council of Foreign Relations report describes:

> While there is no denying that the United States has substantive differences of policy and position with other states, many of the most controversial U.S. actions might have generated less antagonism with better presentation. From the outright rejection of the Kyoto climate change pact to the seeming dismissal of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the United States appears to be an obstructionist, not a constructive critic. Better by far to have a different approach: one that favors fixing problems where possible and walking away from the negotiating table only as a last option and always with a good explanation for our actions. Better by far to have a different process: one that would have produced a U.S. proposal to fix Kyoto's flaws (or at the very least list them), rather than making the United States seem callous about global warming and dismissive of the 10 years of work by 160 countries that went into the agreement. Washington also could have found a better way to articulate concerns with the ICC, rather than just walking away and signaling a lack of concern.[24]

Poor strategic communication, or no strategic communication, comes with a price.

All We Say and Do

Even though I assert it as part of the unassailable core of strategic communication, the fact that actions communicate and that strategic communication is about harnessing the information content generated by all that

we *say* and *do* is so important that it needs to be one of the recurring themes of the book. Too often everyone smiles and nods agreement when you remind them that actions speak louder than words and must be integrated in planning and conducting strategic communication, only to go back to their routines of thinking exclusively about relationships with and messaging through news media or traditional print, audio, or video broadcasts. Don't let that be you.

Inform, Influence, and Persuade

I consistently discuss strategic communication as being the capstone for all government and defense efforts to inform, influence, and persuade. I like those three terms to capture the essence of the undertaking. I use less frequently but am also perfectly happy with other language. "Signaling" and "engagement" are both fine, as is "shaping" (as my coauthors and I advocate in a 2007 monograph).[25] "Communication" is also fine, especially when adjacent to a reminder that actions communicate. I steer clear of terms that include or imply "ideas" or "ideology," as they lead toward "war of ideas," which, as I will describe later, I find to be a particularly unproductive metaphor. I am also prejudiced against "hearts and minds" because I know its historical antecedents in the Vietnam War era differ significantly from its contemporary usage, because it is overused, because it is imprecise, and because it lends itself to militaristic metaphors ("battle for hearts and minds") that are no more productive than "war of ideas."

The Crawl, Walk, Run Progression for Strategic Communication

A metaphor popular in business growth and in military training and education is the "crawl, walk, run" progression. I find this progression to be a very useful frame for understanding many of the differences in approaches to strategic communication and for resolving some of these tensions. Consider, for example, that for some, strategic communication focuses on just getting to a minimal level of deconfliction between our different modes of broadcast and avoiding information fratricide. For others, the emphasis is on long-term partnerships and engagements, and the necessary enabling cultural and contextual knowledge. For others still, strategic communication should leverage the private sector for a variety of resources and capabilities that are not organic to the government. I argue that all of these things can have a place in strategic communication but that some things have to come before other things, either because they are logically prior (and prerequisite), or just easier to develop from the current baseline: crawl, walk, run.

To extend the example, minimal deconfliction of content in various modes of broadcast is clearly at the crawl level, while developing and leveraging

some cultural expertise is at the walk level, while true mastery of all relevant cultural details is probably at the run level. There's certainly a little squishiness in the three categories, and room to prioritize (perhaps, for example, leveraging the private sector is only a walk-level development, but it lets you access run-level cultural expertise), but "crawl, walk, run" is a useful metaphor for remembering that some things are easier than others and that some things have to come before other things when you are building a new enterprise.

Central Disagreements in Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is different things to different people. Some of the disagreement comes from emphasis on different parts of the broader enterprise (such as those who focus on messaging versus those who emphasize countering adversary propaganda), and some disagreements stem from emphases on different aspects of the crawl, walk, run progression (those who focus on unity of message versus those who focus on the importance of cultural and contextual knowledge). Here I briefly list some of these disputed topics. Each will receive much deeper attention later in the book.

Definition, Particularly Scope

The actual definition of strategic communication is highly contentious. While most interested parties agree broadly about what strategic communication intends to be at the enterprise level, disagreements creep in about the scope. There are wide-ranging views about just how broadly encompassing strategic communication is, and about exactly what is in, and what is out. For example, while most are willing to consider strategic communication to be a whole of government enterprise, some would also like to see citizen diplomacy embraced by the concept. As another example, while most agree that strategic communication is conducted in pursuit of national policy goals, some want to twist this such that they conduct strategic communication when they pursue the parochial interests of their organization or government agency, imputing an alignment between narrow organizational objectives and broader national goals just because their organization is part of the government.

The biggest definitional dispute, however, is over what activities should and should not be called strategic communication. For example, the strategic communication cognoscenti within the Pentagon currently hew to a vision of "strategic communication as a process," where only the integrating and coordinating activities are the strategic communication part, and all the different voices and engagement media (the capabilities) that are coordinated should be described separately. This is in stark contrast with the rest of the government, where pretty much all other agencies lack a formal definition but mean

to include both the integration and the capabilities integrated when they say, "strategic communication" (or, as is more often the case outside of the Department of Defense, "strategic communications," with an extra "s" at the end).

Broadcast versus Engagement

Another tension in discussions of strategic communication concerns the approach to communication. One side of the disagreement is caricaturized as emphasizing the "great megaphone" approach,[26] where the principle concern of the undertaking is finding just the right message and broadcasting it over and over again to the desired audience in as many different media as possible. The other side roundly rejects broadcast-only messaging for forgetting that communication is, by its very nature, two-directional, and asserts that strategic communication must involve listening and engagement with partners who should not be described as "audience" because that term itself suggests passive listening rather than effective two-way exchange.

This disagreement is in some sense a bit of a straw man. No thoughtful person would propose to seek to inform, influence, and persuade solely through one-way messaging. Similarly, no critic of one-way messaging would suggest that all broadcast messaging be stopped or that ensuring that broadcast messages are coordinated and deconflicted isn't a valuable undertaking. The disagreement becomes even thinner if you think of coordination and deconfliction of traditional broadcast messages as a crawl-level element of strategic communication and integrated listening, engagement, and proper two-way communication as a walk- or run-level aspiration for strategic communication.

Getting the Balance Right: Taped-Message Automatons versus Well-Meaning Loose Cannon

There is an important balance to be struck between vague, hand-waving, worthlessly high-level goals statements and specific statements of objectives or themes that are so detailed or overspecified that they are overmanaged, classified, or impossible to tailor to the nuances of individual local environments.

One of the critical challenges in strategic communication is deciding just how much adherence to require to high-level themes and messages. Too much pressure to conform and suddenly everyone is woodenly parroting the same three talking points. Too little coordination and conformity, and everyone is talking out their ear, and information fratricide resumes.

Obviously, the ideal situation includes (1) a structure that provides high-level themes that are focused enough to be meaningful but are not too specific to apply to the variety of different contexts in the area they relate to; and

(2) enough flexibility that every government representative can address those themes in their own words while retaining personal credibility (and the human touch) but without risk of damaging contradictions with other government voices or with the situation they face in their specific context. Where exactly that balance point is and how to get there is not clear and not agreed upon.

Inform versus Influence

To some, "influence" is a dirty word. While they want to influence people, they don't want to admit that they are doing it, so they call it "informing" them instead. The underlying logic is that if desired audiences only had complete information (were informed) and better understood U.S. policies and intentions, they wouldn't resist those policies. Under this view, it is the policies themselves that are persuasive, so the information is value neutral.

I think that is naïve. There is no such thing as value-free information, so any effort to inform has cognitive influence potential, whether intended or not. Further, I believe that those who do the informing do intend for it to be persuasive. If we didn't think the explanation of a policy was likely to persuade others to be more accepting of it, we probably wouldn't bother. Information influences.

The disagreements come when we start being candid about our intent to influence (rather than magically neutrally informing) and when the influence slips into manipulation and falsehood. While a sensible approach to strategic communication requires that we admit to intending influence, there is disagreement about the appropriateness of including falsehood, deception, or propaganda (with all the pejorative implications of the term) as part of the undertaking.

Plan of the Remainder of the Book

Chapter 2 begins by offering a working definition of strategic communication and describing what I consider to be the unassailable core of the concept. The chapter then considers the troubled lexicon surrounding strategic communication, beginning with the term itself, but also discussing ambiguities and disagreements surrounding public diplomacy, information operations, psychological operations, and propaganda. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of possible goals for strategic communication, also contested space. Chapter 3 reviews the history of public diplomacy and strategic communication in the United States, taking both concepts back to the dawn of the nation, well before the advent of the use of those two specific terms. Chapter 4

describes the U.S. government participants in strategic communication and considers the boundaries of the concept, both in and outside of government. Chapter 5 provides some detail about what makes strategic communication so hard for the United States, first enumerating challenges facing strategic communication at the whole of government level, and then focusing specifically on challenges faced by the U.S. military. Chapter 6 offers best practices and practical advice for the organization and conduct of strategic communication, as well as dividing the host of desired capabilities for strategic communication into a sensible crawl, walk, run progression for future development. Chapter 7 offers some concluding remarks and makes some suggestions regarding how we get from here to there in pursuit of a vision of effective strategic communication.

Notes

1. As Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has noted, "Over the long term, we cannot kill and capture our way to victory" over "terrorist networks and other extremists." See Robert M. Gates, speech delivered at the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, Washington, D.C., July 15, 2008.

2. Department of Defense, *Strategic Communication Science and Technology Plan*, Washington, D.C., April 2009, p. 2.

3. From U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart's famous quote regarding pornography that "I know it when I see it," in his concurring opinion in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* 378 U.S. 184, 1964, regarding possible obscenity in *The Lovers*.

4. Michael G. Mullen, "From the Chairman: Strategic Communication: Getting Back to Basics," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 55, 4th Quarter, 2009, pp. 2–4.

5. Christopher Paul, *Whither Strategic Communication? An Inventory of Current Proposals and Recommendations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND,OP-250-RC, 2009.

6. Paul, *Whither Strategic Communication?*

7. Department of Defense, *Report on Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., December 2009; The White House, *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., March 2010.

8. Fawzia Sheikh, "DOD Launches POM-12 Study On Info Ops, Strategic Communication," *Inside the Pentagon*, May 20, 2010.

9. Kennon H. Nakamura and Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Washington, D.C., December 18, 2009, p. 2.

10. U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, *Information & Cyberspace Symposium*, Fort Leavenworth, Kans., April 15–18, 2008, p. 5.

11. Peter W. Chiarelli and Stephen M. Smith, "Learning from Our Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future," *Military Review*, September–October 2007, p. 6.

12. Emily Goldman, "Strategic Communication: A Tool for Asymmetric Warfare," *Small Wars Journal*, October 6, 2007, p. 6.

13. Headquarters Department of the Army, *Information Operation: Doctrine, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, Washington, D.C., FM 3–13 (FM 100–6), November 2003, pp. 1–5.

14. Marshall V. Ecklund, "Strategic Communications: How to Make it Work?" *IOSphere*, Fall 2005, p. 8.

15. Defense Science Board, *Task Force on Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, January 2008, p. 13.

16. Bruce Gregory, "Public Diplomacy and National Security: Lessons from the U.S. Experience," *Small Wars Journal*, August 14, 2008, p. 6.

17. Todd C. Helmus, Christopher Paul, and Russell W. Glenn, *Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MG-607-JFCOM, 2007, p. 171.

18. The White House, *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., March 2010, p. 3.

19. U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Functional Concept for Strategic Communication (SC)*, 2010, p. 2.

20. Major Cliff W. Gilmore, "Appendix P—Principles, Credibility, and Trust" in U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy*, Suffolk, Va.: U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center, Version 3.0, June 24, 2010, p. P-7.

21. Anonymous interview with the author, undated.

22. Dennis M. Murphy, "Talking the Talk: Why Warfighters Don't Understand Information Operations," *IO Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 2009, pp. 18–21.

23. Edward R. Murrow, the first director of the U.S. Information Agency, famously quipped after being called in to help with damage control after the 1961 invasion at the Bay of Pigs, "If they want me in on the crash landings, I better damn well be in on the take-offs." He is quoted in Crocker Snow, Jr., "Murrow in the Public Interest: From Press Affairs to Public Diplomacy," in *Edward R. Murrow: Journalism at Its Best*, April 2006. The original quotation apparently belongs to Harold Stassen and came to Murrow courtesy of Senator Arthur H. Vandenburg, *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg*, Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood Press, 1974.

24. Council on Foreign Relations, *Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy*, 2003, p. 2.

25. Helmus et al., *Enlisting Madison Avenue*.

26. Former undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs James Glassman has repeatedly referred to the "great megaphone" approach to public diplomacy since leaving office.

CHAPTER 2

What Is Strategic Communication, and What Should It Be?

> Strategic communication is an emergent concept with several definitions floating about, no doctrinal base and a lexicon that fails completely to convey the desired understanding.
>
> —Professor Dennis Murphy, U.S. Army War College[1]

What is strategic communication, and what should it be? This chapter is about the lexicon of and relating to strategic communication. After reinforcing a preliminary vision for strategic communication, the discussion turns to the contested terms. Beginning with strategic communication, I review definitions offered and discuss what perspectives or views prefer which characteristics of the definition. This is followed by a review of the related lexicon and various ambiguities therein. Once the lexical ambiguities are clearly laid out, the discussion turns to the uncertainties about exactly what sorts of goals or objectives strategic communication should be used to service. The chapter concludes with my vision for strategic communication and an articulation of a crawl, walk, run approach to the progressive development of strategic communication.

Prelude to the Lexicon

In chapter 1 I offered up what I assert to be the unassailable core of strategic communication in four elements:

- Informing, influencing, and persuading is important.
- Effectively informing, influencing, and persuading requires clear objectives.
- Coordination and deconfliction are necessary to avoid information fratricide.
- Actions communicate.

Supporting these elements I offer a working definition of strategic communication as a place to start: *coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives.*

Unfortunately, there are many different definitions of strategic communication, and many different understandings of those definitions. Heck, there isn't even agreement on whether it is "strategic communication" or "strategic communications" with an "s" at the end.[2] Part of the problem is that there are genuine disagreements about the content of the terminology. If you gathered 10 strategic-communication practitioners or experts around a table and asked each to define and describe strategic communication, you'd get 10 different answers. Not only would each use slightly different language or emphasize slightly different parts, there would also be real differences in what was said. Most of those disagreements would probably be fairly mild and abstract, philosophical, or theoretical, but some of the differences would have real and significant consequences for how we should organize for and pursue strategic communication. This lack of consensus and frequent lack of precision in the use of the term is costly. As one discussant writes, "Many players inconsistently employ the term in such a manner as to render it meaningless."[3] Frustration with the ambiguity and inconsistency has led many to reject or try to move away from using the term strategic communication at all (as will be discussed in a later section).

In order to move past these disagreements and confusion, we need an official government-wide definition that, while everyone may not accept, everyone must conform to when using the term. "The absence of an official national strategic communication definition . . . convolutes United States Government efforts to develop strategic communication policy."[4] Simply trusting everyone to "know it when they see it" won't work out.

Contested Terms

Our attack on the lexicon begins with the term "strategic communication" itself. I start with the available "official" definitions of strategic communication, and then move on to different aspects of or approaches to strategic communication that different definitions (or just uses) of the term imply. After this detailed treatment of strategic communication, the discussion turns to public diplomacy, information operations, audience, and several other contentious terms in the supporting lexicon.

Strategic Communication

There are almost as many different definitions of strategic communication as there are scholars and practitioners writing on the subject. While most articles or papers written by uniformed military personnel or defense civilians cite the official Department of Defense (DoD) definition (which I'll get to in a moment), they then almost universally offer either some criticism of that

definition, an interpretation of that definition that is tantamount to being a new definition, or an accusation that someone else is misunderstanding that definition. While many of those interpretations appear or are referenced in what follows, let's begin with the available "official" definitions. I have "official" in quotes, because some might contest how official these official definitions are. By official I mean simply to denote clear definitions stated in official products: government reports, doctrine, or other formal government publications. What I'm not including in *official* is articles, studies, white papers, or publications of nongovernmental (or even semigovernmental, like the Defense Science Board) entities.

While most maintain that strategic communication should be a whole of government undertaking, virtually all official efforts to define the term have come from the Department of Defense. The earliest official definition of which I am aware comes from the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication: "focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power."[5]

This definition differs very little from the current official DoD definition, as recorded in Joint Publication 1–02, the *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, which defines strategic communication as "focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power."[6] The changes are subtle (and fairly minimal) between the 2006 definition and the current definition. "Process and efforts" have given way simply to "efforts." "United States Government interests, policies, and objectives" are now advanced instead of "national interests and objectives." "Programs, plans, themes, messages, and products" are coordinated instead of "information, themes, plans, programs, and actions," and "actions" is now relative to the instruments of national power rather than the list of things to be coordinated. Though those changes seem like subtle points, the nuanced differences feed some of the tensions discussed later.

Because JP 1–02 is the DoD's official definition, every subsequent official DoD discussion parrots the JP 1–02 definition, then offers an elaboration or explanation that is tantamount to a new definition, without contesting the existing official definition. For example, the 2009 *Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept*, after reiterating the JP 1–02 definition, elaborates that "strategic communication essentially means sharing meaning (i.e., communicating) in support of national objectives (i.e., strategically). This involves

listening as much as transmitting. It applies not only to information, but also to physical communication—that is, action that conveys meaning."[7] Examples of similar treatment, where a DoD source repeats JP 1–02 and then offers an alternative explanation, appear in the discussion that follows.

Official definitions elsewhere in the government have been sparse. The Department of State, for example, does not have an official published definition, even though State had the lead for strategic communication under the George W. Bush administration. The closest they came was in the 2007 *National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*. That strategy document never offers a formal definition but hints at one: "Public diplomacy and strategic communication should always strive to support our nation's fundamental values and national security objectives. All communication and public diplomacy activities should

- underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being;
- reach out to those who share our ideals;
- support those who struggle for freedom and democracy; and
- counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression."[8]

This official not-quite-definition is more about what strategic communication *does* than what it is, an important part of the contested space surrounding strategic communication that will be addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

The only other official definition we have comes from the White House 2010 *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, a short white paper written in response to a congressional reporting requirement written into the 2009 Defense Appropriations Act. In the National Framework there is a candid admission that strategic communication has grown in use but has been used differently:

> Over the last few years, the term "strategic communication" has become increasingly popular. However, different uses of the term "strategic communication" have led to significant confusion. As a result, we believe it is necessary to begin this report by clarifying what we mean by strategic communication. By "strategic communication(s)" we refer to: (a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.[9]

While this is the only official offering that has any potential claim to being *the* official government-wide definition of strategic communication because

it comes straight from the White House, it isn't clear that it intends t that. The definition is offered quickly and in a tone that suggests utilit clarification internal to the document: "we want to be clear what we are ing about here," rather than "we want you all to use the term strategic c munication in this way." Still, this provides a useful companion to the o official definitions, and taken together, they all perhaps begin to make why a chapter like this one is necessary.

With that introduction to official definitions as a starting point, the dis sion will now turn to specific points of contention within the various com ing conceptions of strategic communication. Alternative definitions wi presented, and the nuance of the official definitions will be plumbed fo possibility of support for one or more alternative views or interpretati While the subsections that follow treat different aspects of different po definitions of strategic communication, appendix I collects and presents the definitions of strategic communication I've seen and recorded.

Strategic Communication as Process

The 2009 Department of Defense *Report on Strategic Communic* (written in response to the same congressional reporting requirement prompted the White House *National Framework*) reports that

> emergent thinking is coalescing around the notion that strategic communication should be viewed as a process, rather than as a set of capabilities, organizations, or discrete activities. In its broadest sense, "strategic communication" is the process of integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into policy-making, planning, and operations at every level.[10]

What does it mean to say that "strategic communication is a process"? formulation recognizes that the broadest conceptions of strategic comm cation are too broad to be meaningfully discussed as a discrete set of activ and responds to that challenge by winnowing what is included in the te something quite specific.[11] As to what is in and what is out, "process" ju cludes the integrating function, the planning function, the staffing funct Strategic communication as process does not require any new capabil structures, or organizations. You already have the capabilities needed to municate, they just need to be coordinated across components, and fo you don't need any more structure, you just need a process.[12]

Strategic communication as process has budgetary implications. "Pr doesn't really cost anything, nor does it require organization or structu yond the assignment of a few staff officers. It just helps you use what yo

relations and communications as important, fully integrated, consisten and ongoing functions and invests resources in it.

Not only is the term in use in industry, there isn't consistent usage or m there, either.

Usually in industry, strategic communications is part of the publ tions function. While in the department of defense "strategic" actually something, in industry "strategic" is stuck alongside any number o words solely to denote "planned" or "thoughtful."

A related concept in industry is "corporate communication." One tion of corporate communication is "the set of activities involved ir aging and orchestrating all internal and external communications ai creating favorable starting points with stakeholders on which the co depends."[19] Others note that as a part of corporate communication "or tions can *strategically communicate* to their audiences [emphasis added]

Strategic communication as used in government certainly has som lap with strategic communications and corporate communication as u industry. Exactly how much is open for debate depends ultimately or you include in strategic communication. Most uses of the two industry include managing, orchestrating, or coordinating messages; this is e consonant with most government uses. The industry terms are usuall to endorse a "strategic" or thoughtful connection between communi and organizational goals. In government strategic communication, w the goals pursued are simply organizational goals or are exclusively b national policy goals is contested (and will be discussed further in th subsection). The industry terms include both external communicatio internal communications, both outside the organization and internal organization. Government strategic communication might or might i clude internal and external, and has more complicated relationships t sider; not just inside and outside of the organization, but issues rela whether the external audiences are foreign or domestic. Finally, the the industry terms that I have seen focus exclusively on messages— relations, public relations, communication. Though a point of conte many perspectives on government strategic communication (includi own unassailable core) include *actions* as important sources of image sages and signals, a source largely ignored in industry writings I've seen

Strategic Communication and Parochial versus National Interest

Several of the military services have launched service-specific "str communication" plans. I've seen that of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Corps, and the U.S. Air Force; I assume the U.S. Navy has one as well.

service plans treat strategic communication much like broader and higher level definitions, with one major difference. Rather than declaring the objective of service strategic communication to be support for national goals, these plans instead serve the services' narrow parochial interests. Here is an example, the 2007 U.S. Army definition of Army strategic communication: "focused United States Army efforts to understand and engage key audiences to promote awareness, understanding, commitment, and action in support of the Army."[21] It reads like a shortened version of the various official DoD definitions until the end, where instead of U.S. government or national interests as the object, these efforts are *in support of the Army*. The other service strategic-communication plans are similarly worded to focus efforts narrowly in support of the service or of service objectives. The *Marine Corps Strategic Communication Plan* specifies some of these interests: "Legislative Affairs, Public Affairs, and Recruiting."[22]

So, the question is, is that strategic communication, or is it something else? There are reasonable arguments to be made in both directions. Those who assert that service-level plans pursuing service-level interests *are* strategic communication might argue first that if strategic communication is a process, they are just applying the process in pursuit of their service interests. Second, if strategic communication is a set of capabilities, well, they have those capabilities, and they are coordinating them for maximum effectiveness in pursuit of their goals. Third, they might make the more tenuous argument that since strategic communication supports U.S. government interests and they (the services) are part of the U.S. government, then it follows that their (service) interests *are* U.S. government interests.

Those who (like me) would like to exclude the pursuit of such parochial interests from being called strategic communication draw a distinction between the narrow organizational goals of the constitutive organizations of the U.S. government and national policy goals, and want strategic communication to include only the latter.[23] As an officer attending Air Command and Staff College asserted, "It is clear, then, that at the highest levels strategic communication is not a service-specific or even simply a DoD function, but should involve all national instruments of policy and communication. . . . It remains important to note that strategic communication is a *national* priority—not simply a service priority."[24] Another officer writes, "Employing strategic communication-like processes to pursue lower-echelons ends, regardless of those ends' value, means that such actions can not be considered strategic communication."[25]

Those who do not want the service strategic communication plans called strategic communication do not actually object to any of the things the services are *doing*. It is perfectly reasonable for the services to coordinate their messages in pursuit of a positive image with the American public,

full information for congresspersons on proposed U.S. Army programs, more robust pools of recruits; just don't call it strategic communication. Part of the reason I introduce the industry term "corporate communication" in the section above is because I think it is the appropriate term for these undertakings—coordinated and planned efforts to communicate, but in pursuit of organizational goals, not national goals.

Internal Messaging as Part of Strategic Communication

As long as the discussion is focused on corporate communication, what about corporate communication—internal? Does strategic communication include messages to those inside the organization (in this case, government or military personnel)?

To some extent, it almost has to. How would it be possible to coordinate and integrate messaging otherwise? Even if strategic communication is just a process, part of that process needs to include internal functions where themes and messages are passed down from higher levels to be integrated in supporting plans and used by subordinate personnel; similarly, there needs to be functions feeding back information and messages used to higher levels, so that planners know exactly what messages have been communicated and signals sent and how they have been received. Businesses developing a brand identity spend quite a bit of time and energy preparing their employees to represent that brand, and effective government efforts to inform, influence, and persuade should demand no less attention.[26]

What about as audience? Are government personnel part of the target audiences at which strategic communication can be aimed? This is more ambiguous, and the question itself almost wanders into the realm of political-philosophical beliefs about the relationship between a government and its personnel. One view might hold that targeting the internal government audience is unnecessary, as it is part of these individuals' jobs to support national policies, so they shouldn't need to be persuaded to do these things. Another view might suggest that it isn't that they should be included to be persuaded but rather that they need to be considered so that they are fully informed about and understand the broader strategic communication plan they will help execute. After all, if individual employees are going to represent the nation and explain the actions of their government in their own words, they must understand what their government is doing, why, and how what they do personally connects to those broader policies.

Whether or not those inside the government constitute an audience for strategic communication, plans and processes should definitely include effective means to inform them, prepare them, and coordinate their contributions to the broader effort.

Is Strategic Communication Just Messaging or Is It All Activities That Communicate?

Many definitions (and discussions in practice) treat strategic communication as if it only includes formal messaging: the official broadcasts, statements, and press releases from the government. Examples of this include the military service strategic communication plans I criticized in a previous subsection, and others as well. As Professor Dennis Murphy of the U.S. Army War College has noted, "The default definition of strategic communication in the minds of many has to do with media interaction, which further devolves to establishing effective talking points for the next press briefing."[27]

No one actually comes out and says that actions don't communicate, but many definitions omit actions and focus exclusively on messages. For example, Professor Phil Taylor describes information operations, psychological operations, public diplomacy, and public affairs as "the four 'pillars' of strategic communications."[28] Professor Taylor would certainly not contest the importance of actions, but he, like many others, emphasizes the formal messaging component as the primary focus. Similarly, a report from the Congressional Research Service unintentionally limits the scope of strategic communication: "In DOD, activities related to strategic communication are primarily supported by three capabilities: (1) Information Operations (IO), and primarily within IO, Psychological Operations (PSYOP); (2) Public Affairs (PA); and (3) Defense Support to Public Diplomacy (DSPD). Military Diplomacy (MD) and Visual Information (VI) also support strategic communication-related activities."[29]

The latest DoD thinking, as embodied in the 2009 *Report on Strategic Communication*, definitely includes action, indicating a decreased emphasis on strictly "informational" activities, a new emphasis on "hypothesizing physical and informational signals" and "the importance to strategic communication of ensuring effective coordination among a much larger group of capabilities, functions, and activities."[30] Both of the formal definitions of strategic communication from DoD (the 2006 QDR roadmap definition and the JP 1–02 definition) include "actions" though in slightly different ways.

Many writers explicitly assert the importance of all actions. One author notes that "all military activities have a communication element."[31] Another reports that "in fact, senior officials point out that strategic communication is '80% actions and 20% words.'"[32]

One oft-repeated mantra of successful strategic communication is to "minimize the say-do gap."[33] This is the gap between what the government *says* and what the government *does*. Trying to minimize this gap by focusing only on what you say seems to be considering only half the problem.

"Policy actions ultimately speak louder than any words in a communications strategy, but both should be mutually supportive."[34]

The 2010 White House *National Framework for Strategic Communication* clearly agrees. The document clearly highlights the fact that "coordinating words and deeds, including the active consideration of how our actions and policies will be interpreted by public audiences as an organic part of decision-making, is an important task. This understanding of strategic communication is driven by a recognition that what we do is often more important than what we say because actions have communicative value and send messages."[35]

While the preponderant consensus in formal writings on the topic is that strategic communication must include actions and other forms of signaling, in practice, general ambiguity or overemphasis on traditional messaging capabilities often results in implementations of strategic communication that focus solely on informational messaging. For example, I spoke with an officer who worked in a strategic-communication cell during operations in Iraq; during the time he was there the cell's efforts were focused solely on media relations.[36] I suspect he was not alone in this experience of the implementation of strategic communication. This is an example of why how we define things matters and a reminder that how we execute them matters the most. I would be happy to let soft definitions slide past and "know it when I see it" with strategic communication if we did it better.

Truth, Lies, Credibility, and Spin in Strategic Communication

Another tension in strategic communication is whether or not the messages coordinated must all be wholly true. Those who argue for the "truth only" position argue strongly and persuasively. The Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World advocates exclusively truthful and candid communications: "Finally, we want to be clear: 'Spin' and manipulative public relations and propaganda are not the answer."[37] The grounds for these objections are the preservation of credibility: "If you try to manipulate or lie, you will immediately lose credibility."[38]

Credibility is critical in this domain, and disclosure of efforts to manipulate or deceive can cause significant and lasting harm to U.S. credibility. "Even the most well-intentioned attempts to establish, preserve, and strengthen trust and credibility will quickly backfire if a given public decides it is being manipulated or deceived."[39]

No one I am aware of is publicly arguing that our strategic communication should be based on falsehood. Still, it remains an open question: if any part of the government is engaged in manipulations based on falsehood, should it be coordinated as part of strategic communication? There are two debates here, both of which would be hotly contested. First, there would be fierce debate over whether or not any part of the government should be disseminating untruths or otherwise engaged in manipulation. Second, if there were to be

such activities, there is debate over whether or not they should be integrated under strategic communication. As Vietnam-era war correspondent Joe Galloway advises in a 2004 Op-Ed piece, the military should avoid "mixing the liars and the truth tellers in one pot."[40] This is good advice on its face: surely you don't want any individual spokesperson to be thought of as someone who speaks the truth sometimes, and not others. However, in actual practice, this is sometimes taken too far. I have heard of public-affairs personnel who refuse to be in the same room with information operations personnel, lest they get "IO stink" on them and lose credibility.[41] Apparently they believe that if they don't know about it, it can't hurt their credibility.

To me it seems self-evident that if we are to avoid information fratricide, we need to be coordinating *all* the messages and signals, truthful or not. However, it also seems self-evident to me that in the contemporary information environment the possibility of sustaining a falsehood for any length of time without disclosure is so scant, and the resulting loss of credibility so significant, that such deceptions must be very carefully considered, if not eschewed entirely.

What You Call It Doesn't Matter: "Know It When You See it"

Several individuals with responsibility for strategic communication in the DoD have told me candidly that they don't care what the definition is. Official definitions are hard to change and are often "definition by committee" with all that that implies. What you actually *do* as part of strategic communication is what matters, what you call it doesn't. If most people mostly share an unstated understanding of strategic communication and we actually get better at doing "it" (leaving aside what "it" really is), then that is OK. This position maintains that, like pornography, with strategic communication, we will "know it when we see it."[42]

This position actually argues for leaving the definition of strategic communication ambiguous and not creating strategic-communication-specific doctrine. The DoD is a doctrine-driven organization. If there is a new formal definition that is *wrong* (rather than just being vague) and that definition is propagated in doctrine, then that definition would become "the truth" for DoD personnel, and would undermine the concept and its practice.

Strategic Communication Is Vague: Say What You Mean!

One of the big challenges with the term "strategic communication," even among those who would have broad agreement on a definition, is that it is a broad term, potentially including lots of different aspects of a complex undertaking. Too much confusion comes in when folks who agree and should be talking to each other end up talking past each other because each is thinking

about a different part of the strategic communication enterprise when the other says "strategic communication." In a 2010 *Joint Force Quarterly* article, I offer a working solution to this problem (a solution which may continue to be necessary even if we get an effective government-wide definition of strategic communication): say what you mean![43]

The proposed solution is simple: never say "strategic communication" without also including a qualifier to make clear what aspect, element, or part of strategic communication you intend the current conversation to discuss. In *Joint Force Quarterly*, I offer five different elements of strategic communication as possible specifiers, but no one should feel constrained to just those five; if you find you want to talk about some other element of strategic communication, do so, but say clearly what part you mean to talk about.

The five elements I offer as a decomposition of strategic communication are

- enterprise level strategic communication;
- strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes;
- communication strategies and themes;
- communication, information, and influence capabilities;
- knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities.[44]

Drawing from my *JFQ* article, I elaborate each here:

"Enterprise-level strategic communication" is "capital S, capital C" Strategic Communication. This is the commonly shared understanding of the term that embraces a potentially quite broad range of government activities and encourages their coordination toward national or theater strategic ends. This term is useful only to indicate what general activity domain a discussion targets and to remind everyone that all actions and utterances have information and influence potential—and that this potential can be harnessed and aligned in support of national or theater goals.

As an element of the strategic communication enterprise, "strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes" constitute a discrete set of activities and require distinct organization, procedures, and personnel. How are general national and theater strategic goals translated into information and influence goals or specific desired information effects? How are the potentials inherent in communication capabilities incorporated into campaign plans? How are agreed-to communication objectives disseminated, deconflicted, and synchronized across the joint force and throughout the interagency community? How are themes and objectives shared with allies and partners (if they are)? A whole host of important questions can be meaningfully asked and answered by specifying this element of strategic communication as the topic of discussion.

"Communication strategies and themes" are the strategic-communication element that concerns content and involves both the inputs and the outputs from the strategic-communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes. This includes the national or campaign goals or objectives or desired information effects (inputs) that planning processes will translate into communication goals and themes (outputs) and incorporate into plans. Content outputs, such as communication objectives and themes, are the elements that are integrated and synchronized across the joint force, especially to and for communication, information, and influence capabilities.

"Communication, information, and influence capabilities" are the broadcast dissemination, messaging, and engagement elements of strategic communication. Communication, information, and influence capabilities certainly include public affairs, psychological operations, defense support to public diplomacy, defense visual information, and civil affairs. These capabilities might include broader elements of the force, such as maneuver elements conducting civil-military operations or military police operating vehicle checkpoints abroad. They might include the interactions of any element of the force with foreign populations or the prevalence of language and cultural awareness training across the force. They might include every action or utterance of every deployed soldier, sailor, airman, and marine.

Supporting all of these activities are "knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities." These capabilities include media monitoring, media-use-pattern research, target-audience analysis, and social, historical, cultural, and language expertise, along with other relevant analytic and assessment capabilities. Cultural knowledge and audience analysis are critical for translating broad strategic goals into information and influence goals. Understanding audiences specifically and human dynamics generally is critical to identifying themes, messages, and engagement approaches that will lead to desired outcomes or information effects. Data collection and assessment contribute the feedback that allows two-way communication and engagement (rather than just broadcast) and that also makes it possible to demonstrate and report impact or effect from communication activities.

These five specifications connect to each other logically. Within the broader "strategic communication enterprise," national- or campaign-level goals and objectives or desired information effects constitute the inputs to the "strategic communication planning, integration, and synchronization processes." Based on "knowledge of human dynamics and analysis or assessment capabilities," these processes transform and incorporate the "communication strategies and themes" and provide them to commanders who employ the various available "communication, information, and influence capabilities" in pursuit of desired objectives. The planning, integration, and synchronization processes and knowledge, analysis, and assessment capabilities continue to be useful to

force elements as they broadcast or disseminate their themes and messages or otherwise engage and appraise the impact of these activities.

As noted above, these five categories do not intend to be exhaustive. If there is something else under the broad tent of strategic communication that you wish to discuss, by all means do so (and try to describe it before you do). One possible candidate for a sixth category could be "rapid response." Many who are concerned with strategic communication more broadly are specifically concerned with countering misinformation or disinformation in the information environment. This involves both media monitoring (to find the false or erroneous information in the first place) and some sort of rapid-response capability to contact media outlets and contest stories, suggest corrections, or release competing (but correct) information. While those elements might be able to be decomposed to fit into the five categories I've proposed previously, there's no need. If you want to talk about rapid response in the information environment as part of strategic communication, please do, just say that you are doing so before you launch in.

Looking for a Replacement Term for Strategic Communication

Many have indicated dissatisfaction with the phrase "strategic communication" for being "too broad and vague."[45] Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has joined the chorus by indicating, "Frankly, I don't care for the term."[46] Many others who work in this area find fault with the term, too, while embracing the concept. Some complain that "using the term 'strategic' communication naturally brings a mistaken intuition that it resides only at the strategic level."[47] Other complaints stem from the issues mentioned above: lack of shared understanding, competing definitions, different use in industry, and a sense that the term by itself doesn't sufficiently communicate enough of the content of the concept.

The obvious solution is to find an alternative phrase, but this has proven to be more of a challenge than one might think. Several candidate alternatives have been offered. The 2010 *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy* suggests that we use "Communication Strategy" to refer to the overall construct, using different terms to describe subordinate functions.[48] Tony Corn tries out "perception management," discards it, and suggests "managing expectations."[49] "Engagement," with and without an additional word, is in vogue as an alternative; the National Security Council now has a "Global Engagement Directorate" and the State Department coordinates strategic communication with interagency partners through its Global Strategic Engagement Center.[50] Prominent scholars from the Center for a New American Security suggest we instead label the construct "strategic public engagement."[51] An early draft of the Strategic Communication

Capabilities Based Assessment (completed in 2010) is reported to have included "signaling integration" as a candidate replacement term.[52]

Some of the proposed replacement terms are better than others, and some are better in some situations, or for some aspect of the concept to be replaced. In my opinion, none of them is the desired unambiguously better, clearer term. This is a nontrivial challenge. Try to find a two- (or even three-) word phrase that adequately captures the core of the concept *and* does so without requiring several additional paragraphs of explanation in order to be understood by a new initiate. For example, I think "signaling integration" is great at capturing several of the core tenets of strategic communication. "Signaling" makes clear that it isn't just messages we're concerned about, but all actions and transmissions, and "integration" speaks to the integration, coordination, and deconfliction piece. However, several critics have (perhaps rightly) indicated that "signaling" won't be clear to someone newly encountering the term and will either invoke images of automobile turn signals or of semaphore flags (like the old Signal Corps).

The ideal replacement phrase would suffer none of the above problems. It would be short (two or three words); the English meaning of the words in combination would directly denote what we want to talk about; the phrase would imply clear boundaries such that current disagreements are minimized; and no other community should be currently using the phrase to mean something else. As noted, this is a nontrivial set of requirements!

In my mind, the single hardest part is fitting the concept into two or three words. Given 20 words, I could certainly beat "strategic communication"; but no one is going to hold still for an even 10-word acronym in this area. The reason this is so hard is that we are trying to capture at least four distinct categories of concept in those two or three words. Here are the categories and single words that might represent that category. For fun, mix and match terms from multiple categories to make your own replacement term for strategic communication. Then, look at the words (and categories) you didn't use, and think about the consequences of those omissions.

Category 1—strategic; intended; purposeful; purposive; deliberate; considered; effective; for effect; planned; intentional and unintended; goal-oriented; calculated

Category 2—coordination; deconfliction; integration; combination; synchronization; full-spectrum

Category 3—communication; transmit or exchange information; engagement; interaction; interchange; information; actions; deeds; behavior; signals; signaling; cognitive; influence; persuade; effects; narrative; ideas; shaping perceptions; actions, images, and utterances; shaping; rhetoric; presence, posture, and profile;[53] both actions and utterances

Category 4—in support of national objectives; foreign; global; public; for effect; cognitive domain; cognitive space

Playing this game for myself I came up with a fistful of possible alternatives. None is particularly satisfying, though some are better than others. Perhaps this is a good illustration of why no one has come up with an unambiguously winning replacement term:

- cognitive shaping
- purposive pronouncements, presence, posture, and profile (P^3)
- persuasive pronouncements, presence, posture, and profile (P^3)
- intended information effects
- coordinated information intentions
- considered cognitive engagement
- purposeful combined actions and signals
- deliberate rhetoric and deeds
- ". . . in support of national objectives" can be appended to any of the above.

Bottom line: "strategic communication" isn't perfect, but it is better than any easily identifiable alternative *and* has the virtue of being the term we are currently using. Rather than replacing it, I really believe the best solution is to adequately define it. A strict and sufficient definition and militant defense of that definition will allow us to move out rather than constantly being stuck on our own lexicon. Failing that, my advice above regarding adding a specifying qualifier to strategic communication every time it is used would also help reduce tensions surrounding the term.

However, if the term becomes toxic and must be jettisoned or replaced, all right. Better that than losing the underlying concept in a throwing-out-the-baby-with-the-bathwater fashion.

Public Diplomacy

The second major term in the troubled lexicon of strategic communication is "public diplomacy." Public diplomacy has a much longer pedigree than strategic communication but is only marginally better defined.

According to the Public Diplomacy Alumni Association Web site, the term itself was first used by Dean Edmund Gullion of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1965.[54] As for the definition, a lengthy discussion of different views of public diplomacy on the University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy Web site concludes, "There is no single agreed-upon definition of the term."[55]

An early Murrow Center brochure provided a convenient summary of Gullion's concept:[56]

> Public diplomacy . . . deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions

> of international relation beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its impact on policy; communication between those whose job is communications, as diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.

A 2009 Congressional Research Service report offers this discussion of the definition of public diplomacy:

> Public diplomacy is defined in different ways, but broadly it is a term used to describe a government's efforts to conduct foreign policy and promote national interests through direct outreach and communication with the population of a foreign country. Public diplomacy activities include providing information to foreign publics through broadcast and Internet media and at libraries and other outreach facilities in foreign countries; conducting cultural diplomacy, such as art exhibits and music performances; and administering international educational and professional exchange programs.[57]

Another source lists the following as examples of public-diplomacy activities: educational exchange programs for scholars and students, visitor programs, language training, cultural events and exchanges, and radio and television broadcasting.[58] Public diplomacy scholar Professor Nick Cull avoids listing specific activities but instead describes five elements of public diplomacy: listening, advocacy, culture and exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting.[59] All of these kinds of things are the accepted core of traditional public diplomacy.

The debate only gets contentious when someone using the term wants to promote the prominence of one activity over another, or draw a boundary to exclude a certain kind of activity; for example, "the debates over whether public diplomacy is propaganda or cultural relations, international broadcasts or educational exchanges, tough- or tender-minded, mutual understanding or persuasion."[60]

I think the definition of public diplomacy is far less consequential than that for strategic communication. Public diplomacy has a significant existing community of practice. While lacking a precise shared definition, there is broad consensus about the general nature of public diplomacy and agreement on what constitutes the core activities (no one debates whether public diplomacy is a process or a capability). The actually significant disagreements about public diplomacy surround two questions. First, who does it? Second, what are you trying to accomplish with public diplomacy? As Bruce Sherman, director of strategic planning at the Broadcasting Board of Governors told

me, "Public diplomacy has been divided over what it is trying to accomplish for a long time."[61] I address the first of these two questions here, briefly. The second, I defer for the broader discussion of competing goals for strategic communication in a section with that heading later in the chapter.

Who Does It?

The traditional division of public diplomacy contrasts it with traditional diplomacy, where diplomacy is government-to-government relationships (G2G) and public diplomacy is government-to-foreign public relationships (G2P).[62] More recently there has been an interest in "citizen diplomacy" (P2P), the idea that individual citizens help shape foreign relations "one handshake at a time."[63] This is simply a boundary issue for the definition. Clearly G2P communications and engagement are part of public diplomacy, especially in the core lanes of cultural and educational exchange programs, and international broadcast and outreach. Many of the same kinds of activities could be undertaken by individual citizens (or by firms, clubs, or other nongovernmental organizations) and presumably deliver the same kinds of benefits.

The issue really only matters in so far as a country seeks to conduct *coordinated* public diplomacy. While official government public-diplomacy programs might be prioritized, focused, or integrated to pursue certain goals, the ability of the government to have much influence on the public-diplomacy (or public-diplomacy-like) activities of private companies and private citizens is somewhat constrained.

Information Operations

Information operations (IO) is another term in the troubled related lexicon. As with strategic communication, there is a great deal of confusion associated with information operations (IO). Confusion stems from many sources: genuine ambiguity in the lexicon,[64] both willful and unintentional misuse of the term,[65] and both genuine misunderstanding and genuine disagreement about what IO are and ought to be.[66]

Information operations are an exclusively military function. Only the Department of Defense conducts IO, and when other interagency partners use the term, they are referring to something DoD does. This gives IO a leg up over strategic communication, as a single executive entity (the DoD) owns IO, and the department can create a vision and a definition and enforce it within their ranks.

Current joint doctrine defines information operations as "the integrated employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network

operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own."[67] This definition does little to clear up the confusion, both because of ambiguities it itself contains and because many imagine it to (or want it to) mean something else, and because *information operations as actually practiced deviate from that definition.*[68]

Several different visions of IO currently compete for acceptance, including several implied by the joint definition. Here I caricaturize these visions to provide a better understanding of what the term could mean.

Base Case/As Is

The vision implied by the current state of IO is not what anyone wants it to be, and is, no doubt, part of why information operations and strategic communication were selected for a DoD "front end assessment" in the latter half of 2010.[69] In its current state, IO can be caricaturized as a poorly understood and vaguely bounded integrating function coordinating disparate capabilities in pursuit of ambiguous objectives.

IO as a Coordinating and Integrating Function

IO in current doctrine is a function for the coordination and integration of various capabilities in pursuit of a range of information objectives. Some contemporary proponents want to do away with specific lists of capabilities[70] but retain a vision of IO as the practice of deconflicting and synergizing different capabilities to achieve effects that are greater than the sum of their parts.

IO as Command and Control Warfare

Information operations grew out of command and control warfare (C2W) in the late 1990s, and some still hold to that initial inspiring vision. The current definition of IO is an unambiguous direct descendent of early C2W writing and thinking, and the residual influence of that early thinking is clear. IO as C2W is a narrow conception, focusing IO exclusively on impacting adversary information and information-systems–based decision-making, while protecting our own. IO under this vision seeks synergies between a tight set of capabilities for a focused set of objectives. This view can be caricaturized as "whoever can keep their OODA loop spinning faster, wins."[71]

IO as Influence

Under this vision, information operations are military efforts to influence foreign populations or adversaries, not any of the various technical capabilities (such as electronic warfare or computer network operations) or C2W. This view seems to be what most people assume IO are anyway, given the way IO are discussed in Congress and by senior leaders.[72] Surely some of this view stems from the role IO have played in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, focusing mostly on persuasion and influence through the PSYOP capability (which is just one of the traditional five pillars of doctrinal IO).

The fact that virtually all information operations in contemporary operations are psychological operations is a significant contributor to conflation between the two. Frequently even senior officers will say "IO" when what they really mean is "PSYOP." Part of the reason for this is genuine conflation and misunderstanding. All the IO is PSYOP, so all the PSYOP must be IO. Part of it, however, stems from a desire to avoid saying "PSYOP," because "psychological operations" sounds much more nefarious than "information operations."

The term PSYOP has a negative reputation, and some use it pejoratively.[73] This is in part because the name connotes something nefarious (some people hear PSYOP and think mind-control lasers), and part because many equate PSYOP with propaganda. Further, while PSYOP does not have mind control lasers, they do have "black PSYOP" (content that is either misattributed or contains falsehoods) in their doctrine and in their toolbox.

In fact, no doubt in part due to this black reputation, in June 2010 U.S. Special Operations Command changed the name of psychological operations (PSYOP) to military information support operations (MISO).[74] In the short term, this may well further complicate the lexicon, as now there will be two terms for the same thing (PSYOP and MISO), and many will not understand the difference between the two; other changes are supposed to accompany the change in name, but what those will be is not known as of this writing.

The vision of IO as influence is the one I find most compelling. My personal preference for the future of IO would involve first a focus on influence to the exclusion of the technical IO capabilities (electronic warfare and cyber stuff), with some emphasis on integration (previous subsection) and some on advocacy (next subsection).

IO as Advocacy, Proponency, or Advice

Because information and influence effects lie outside of the bounds of traditional military training and thinking, one could argue that information needs an advocate or proponent (some prefer the term "advisor") as part of the commander's staff. This view probably comes from overlapping discussions of

information operations and strategic communication. Under this vision, the information proponent, advocate, or advisor would be available to predict possible information impact of actions under consideration, would remind the commander (and the military planners) to consider the cognitive implications of their planned actions, would ensure awareness of various information-related capabilities and how they could contribute to operations, and would serve as a source of advice regarding things informational.

IO as Everything

There is another caricature vision: since everything generates information or impacts the information environment in some way, then everything is IO. This position is only mentioned as a caution or a risk, for if IO is everything, then in practice, IO becomes nothing.[75] If "IO is C2W" is derided as too narrow of a vision for IO, then this is the perilous opposite.

Interlude: Relationships between Strategic Communication, Public Diplomacy, and Information Operations

Some experts use "strategic communication" and "public diplomacy" as synonyms, while some subordinate "strategic communication" to "public diplomacy" and others vice versa.[76] A significant number of discussants in this realm use many of the terms synonymously. For example, the authors of a 2009 Government Accountability Office report freely note that "we use the terms 'public diplomacy,' 'outreach,' and 'strategic communication' interchangeably in this report"[77] Professor Bruce Gregory treats strategic communication and public diplomacy as analogous.[78] In his 2010 book, Leigh Armistead refuses to distinguish between strategic communication, public diplomacy, and information operations.[79]

Many of those who want to use one or more of these terms to denote the same thing point out that the Department of State prefers to talk about public diplomacy, while the Department of Defense prefers to talk about strategic communication.[80] Some observe that the two organizations (DoD and DOS) use different terms and imagine that the activities conducted are very different, or that one is superior to the other. For example, Ambassador William Rugh quotes a longtime Department of State public diplomat's view of strategic communication versus public diplomacy. "PD is diplomacy, SC is not. PD is done by diplomats, SC by people in uniform. DOD regards SC like any other weapon, say a tank, that aims, shoots, hits and moves on. PD is a long-term endeavor. It uses many instruments and the effect is hard to measure in the short run."[81] The quoted diplomat is not alone in viewing strategic communication and information operations as strictly military undertakings

that aren't as good as or are actually a danger to traditional public diplomacy. Public diplomacy scholar Phil Seib asserts:

> Military aspects of communication—strategic communication, information operations, and psychological warfare—operate in a space perilously close to that of public diplomacy and present a challenge to the integrity of the civilian process. The maintenance of the firewall between the civilian/overt and military/covert needs to be a major concern in the structuring of any nation's public diplomacy.[2]

What are the relationships between public diplomacy, strategic communication, and information operations? What should they be?

Let's start with the easy one (or the one that seems like it should be easy). Information operations are currently an exclusively Department of Defense activity, and likely to remain so. As such, they are unambiguously subordinate to strategic communication. If strategic communication is a process, then information operations is one of the activities to be coordinated through that process. If strategic communication is an enterprise, then information operations are one of the capability sets for that enterprise.

Of course, if information operations itself remains a coordinating function (one of the possibilities noted in the previous section), things might be a little more complicated. If strategic communication is a process, then do information operations officers use the strategic communication process in their coordinating? If strategic communication is an integrating function and information operations is an integrating function, then do we have (and do we need) two integrating functions?

I don't think this confusing possible complication needs to be. Strategic communication and information operations should have significant overlap in objectives and approaches in the Department of Defense context, but strategic communication should connect to and be supported by common broader interagency efforts, while information operations should be nested within that broader effort.

The correct relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy is less clear. First, I wish to assert that strategic communication and public diplomacy are not exactly the same thing. They have substantial overlap, but public diplomacy is a narrowly conceived set of activities focused on government engagement, outreach, and broadcast, while strategic communication includes all of those things, but further capabilities, such as those included in information operations, as well as the communicative value of policies and more importantly *actions*. Public diplomacy is not, however, wholly subordinate to strategic communication. Strategic communication, in my vision, includes only elements that could be harnessed in support of

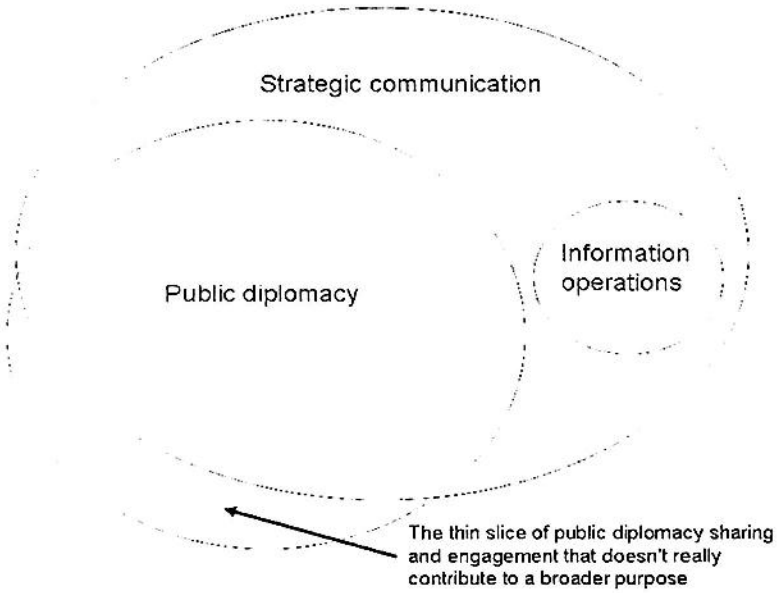

Figure 2.1: Notional Diagram of the Relationship between Strategic Communication, Public Diplomacy, and Information Operations

national policy objectives. Some of public diplomacy is (and should remain) as unfocused and unpurposive efforts to build relationships, foster understanding, and promote engagement with foreign audiences that have absolutely nothing to do with current national policy goals. Figure 2.1 charts this relationship.

I believe that much of contemporary public diplomacy could be better connected to and coordinated with national policy goals (through strategic communication). However, I don't think that all of it should be optimized for strategic communication. This theme is explored further under the heading "competing goals for strategic communication" later in the chapter.

Audience

Now back to the lexicon. Another one of the contentious terms in strategic communication discourse is the seemingly innocuous "audience." Many definitions of strategic communication (including mine) include the word "audience" or "audiences" as the subjects to be targeted in strategic

communication. Some have objected to "audience" as implying the wrong relationship between the government and the subjects. The criticism is that "audience" presupposes a certain mode of interaction. Audiences sit passively and receive whatever performance is in front of them. This lines up quite nicely with strategic communication focused on broadcast but encourages the "great megaphone" mind-set, where strategic communication succeeds if only we hit on the right message and broadcast it in the right media.

Critics of "audience" remind us that strategic communication should be about engagement, and the engagement relationship is different from the broadcaster-to-audience relationship. Engagement captures the two-way nature of communication and the idea that it is important to listen to and understand the other party you wish to communicate with.

Even though I use "audience" in my definition of strategic communication, I think this criticism is spot on. Strategic communication needs to coordinate our broadcasting but also needs to include engagement, and "audience" does not encourage an engagement mind-set.

The problem, then, is the same one that challenges other parts of the lexicon. What is the correct replacement term? Some of the critics of "audience" have offered "stakeholders." Stakeholder, however, fails in several important respects. The principal problem is that stakeholder is already in common use to denote something else. Beyond that, stakeholder also implies only parties who have an interest in whatever the issue communication concerns, when sometimes strategic communication will want to inform, influence, or persuade individuals or groups who do not have a stake or prior interest in the relevant U.S. policies.

I posit that "interlocutors" is denotatively the perfect replacement for "audience." An interlocutor is "a person who takes part in a conversation," exactly what we want here.[33] However, most folks don't regularly and comfortably use the term interlocutor, and for some the term invokes images of the middleman in certain forms of minstrel performances (an alternate definition). Just because the precise meaning of a word fits the need doesn't mean that in actual use the word will suffice.

I will continue to use audience but will do so mindful of the fact that I mean to include interactions with that audience that go beyond "great megaphone" broadcasting. If critics continue to push on "audience" I'll switch to "interlocutor" until they break off their criticism.

Influence versus Inform versus Communicate

Perhaps more about the goals or means of strategic communication than a dispute over the meaning of terms, there is still contention about which should actually be included in the strategic communication lexicon: inform, influence, and/or communicate.

Most of the tension surrounds "influence." As the *Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept* notes, "The term *influence* sometimes carries negative connotations because the term is often associated with deceptive manipulation or exploitation."[84] Should strategic communication actively seek to influence, or is it just about informing or communicating? I believe this is just a semantic argument, and I also believe I know who has perpetuated this contention. My view is that strategic communication *must* be about influence. I will offer two arguments in support of my position. First, that any thoughtful effort to inform is an effort to influence, and second that to support national objectives influence is required.

"What is the difference between informing activities and influencing activities? The difference can only be characterized as a perception."[85] "Inform but not influence" is a traditional mantra in DoD public affairs. Virtually all of the public-affairs officers my coauthors and I interviewed for our 2007 report *Enlisting Madison Avenue* repeated that mantra, but many of them also candidly admitted that there is no such thing as "value-free information," and that public-affairs "informing" efforts are also influencing efforts.[86] They are correct. As the Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept concludes [emphasis in original], "*Influence is a pervasive and fundamental form of any social interaction.*"[87]

Where the public-affairs argument has more traction is in its discussion of the importance of truth and credibility. "Influence" should not be allowed to be considered synonymous with "manipulation." The assistant secretary of defense for public affairs has rightly raised concerns that "the consequences of transmitting anything other than truths destroys the USG's credibility, erodes vital public support . . . and complicates future attempts at successfully communicating."[88] So strategic communication should inform and influence, but not manipulate or deceive.

Should strategic communication influence or just communicate? Prominent psychologist Anthony Pratkanis argues, "Mere communication in the hopes of understanding is just not adequate to counter the propaganda of authoritarians and ethnic hate-mongers; opposing such propaganda requires the efforts of an effective influence campaign."[89] I completely agree.

The appropriate term may depend on the specific goal or objective. John Robert Kelley reports that most views of public diplomacy can be divided up to include three categories of activities:

Information: information management and distribution with an emphasis on short-term events or crises;

Influence: longer-term persuasion campaigns aiming to effect attitudinal change amongst a target population (sometimes referred to as "moving the needle"); and

Engagement: building relationships, also over the long term, to cultivate trust and mutual understanding between peoples (be they groups, organizations, nations, etc.).[89]

These distinctions may be useful in some contexts. The three terms are not offered as being in opposition: public diplomacy (and strategic communication) can (and should, and does) employ all three.

Propaganda

A question that invariably arises at this point in the discussion (if not earlier) is, isn't that propaganda? The answer in large part depends on how you define propaganda. Unfortunately, however you define propaganda, if English is your native tongue (or you otherwise share the cultural-linguistic proclivities of English speaking nations) you impute a strong negative value impression along with that definition. In contemporary English discourse, propaganda connotes lying, deception, and manipulation in an insidious and evil fashion. By contrast, in Latin countries, propaganda just means "advertising."[90]

Because of this connotation of villainy, proponents of an activity (be it strategic communication, information operations, or something else) prefer not to have any part of it labeled as propaganda, even if some portion of that activity would fall within the bounds of traditional definitions of propaganda. As Colonel Jack Summe, formerly of the U.S. Army's 4th Psychological Operations Group observed, "We call our stuff *information* and the enemy's *propaganda*."[91]

So how do we differentiate strategic communication from propaganda? It depends on the definition, but in many situations the only definitional difference is going to be the negative connotation associated with propaganda.

The term itself dates back to 1622, when Pope Gregory XV convened a council of cardinals primarily to oversee missionary activity. The council was called the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), and early use of the term referred to the council itself rather than its activities.[92] Subsequently, propaganda came to be used to refer to efforts to spread either faith or political views, a use consonant with a view of propaganda as advertising.

The negative connotation that adheres to the term dates back at least to the outrage following the revelation that both the United States and the United Kingdom had heavily propagandized the U.S. population to encourage support for participation in World War I. While the content of this propaganda had been almost entirely truthful, it was selectively truthful and was intended to persuade Americans. Americans felt that they had been misled and resented the efforts of their allies and their own government to willfully

try to influence them rather than simply informing them and letting them make up their own minds.

So, again, what is the difference between information and propaganda? Many factors could come into play in attempting to make this distinction: the veracity of the content, the presence or absence of intention to influence, candor about that intention to influence, whether manipulation is involved. Finding a dividing line is tricky. Definitions abound. Scholar Randal Marlin, in his book on propaganda, spends seven full pages of text discussing others' definitions and types of definitions before he offers his own:

> The organized attempt through communication to affect belief or action or inculcate attitudes in a large audience in ways that circumvent or suppress an individual's adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment.[94]

His is an attractive definition, but still leaves some gray areas: is an effort to persuade that encourages adequately informed, rational, reflective judgment still propaganda? Marlin's definition suggests not. As an empirical question, if persuasion is the intent, how do you discriminate between communications that suppress information and audience judgment, and those that do not?

In their book on the subject, Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson describe all contemporary efforts at mass persuasion as propaganda.[95] If intent to persuade is the only requirement to distinguish information from propaganda, then perhaps almost *all* disseminated information is propaganda. Like the debate on the possibility of value free social science,[96] it is unclear the extent to which anyone anywhere provides information without having some purpose in mind. Even if the first order purpose purports to be to inform, this begs the question, to inform to what *purpose*? Information, arguably, is never value free. Any information provided seeks to persuade the audience of something, even if it is nothing more than the veracity of the information itself. Defined this way, almost all information is propaganda.

Naively ignoring the negative connotations associated with propaganda, the DoD definition of the term appears in JP 1–02: "any form of communication in support of national objectives designed to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behavior of any group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly."[97] This is a minimalist definition, equating communication with the intent to persuade with propaganda. No effort is made to make a distinction as Marlin makes, cordoning off persuasion through less than adequate information or with the intention of limiting audience judgment. The DoD definition does not recognize the negative value imputation the term receives in the English-speaking world. This definition makes virtually all strategic-communication and public-diplomacy efforts propaganda, and a sizeable portion of information operations propaganda as well.

Professor Dennis Murphy of the U.S. Army War College reports a proposed change to the DoD definition: "The systematic propagation of information, ideas, or rumors reflecting the views and interests of those advocating a doctrine or cause, deliberately spread for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, movement, or person. . . . Propaganda is designed for political effect and selects information with little concern for truth or context. In common usage 'propaganda' implies misrepresentation, disinformation, and the creation of ambiguity through omission of critical details. Communication activities designed to educate, persuade or influence do not, by themselves, constitute propaganda."[8] This definition is much longer, more nuanced, and is clearly cognizant of the fact that propaganda is a bad word.

Many definitions, little clarity. What to do? For the purposes of this book, I leave propaganda undefined, and I have avoided using the term where possible. When I do use it, I accept that it has a negative connotation and use it pejoratively.

Message versus Signal versus Engagement

What does it mean to communicate as part of strategic communication? Above, I discussed the lexical tension between inform, influence, and communication and argued that influence is really what strategic communication is about. Here at issue is the means of that influence. Is it broadcasting a message? Is it signaling through actions? Is it communicating through engagement?

Strategic communication includes messages and messaging—everyone agrees. The disagreements begin when messaging is the only activity, or even the primary focus. Those who want the means of strategic communication broadened want them broadened in one or more of three ways. First, there are those who want to make sure that the fact that actions also send messages is acknowledged; second, there is the argument that effective strategic communication involves listening to and better understanding those whom you hope to influence; third, there is the assertion that influence depends heavily on complex interactions, including cultural context and the assumptions made by and about the various parties communicating. I address each in turn.

If actions communicate, then strategic communication must include the coordination of government actions. An overemphasis on messaging makes it easy to forget that actions send messages too. One way to retain a broad conception of the range of activities that send messages is to refer to them not as messages but as "signals." Thus, instead of "messaging," strategic communication is about "signaling." It is easier to keep in mind that certain aspects of maneuver, such as a ship cruising off-shore or a patrol traversing a street unavoidably signal something to those witnessing it, whether the signal is intentional or not, and whether you are trying to send a message or not.

I think the implication that it both includes nonverbal messages and possibly unintended messages makes "signals" an important part of the discussion of strategic communication, so much so that I explicitly include "other forms of signaling" in my definition of strategic communication.

When I use the terms "message" or "signal," I mean for them to include images too. If a reminder that actions speak louder than words is necessary to some, then we might as well add that a picture is worth a thousand words. When I use "message," I intend to denote the whole range of traditional communication media, to include pictures, text, and video, and all messaging technology: print, radio, television, mobile phone, portable digital assistant, two-way pager, and so forth. In my definition of strategic communication I call out images explicitly because not everyone uses "message" as broadly as I intend, and a colleague's comments on a draft manuscript of this book suggested the inclusion of images.

American public diplomacy and strategic communication have traditionally been conducted following what former undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs James K. Glassman has called the "great megaphone" model. Under this model, "policy is created, speeches given, press releases written, and press conferences held."[99] What is missing is listening, two-way communication, long-term relationships. In short, "engagement." Engagement is prominently emphasized in many more recent discussions of strategic communication, including the White House National Framework for Strategic Communication.[100]

Professor Steven Corman attacks what he calls the "message influence model" for being too simple to be effective in the extreme complexity of the contemporary information environment.[101] He advocates a "pragmatic complexity model" that emphasizes that "listeners create meanings from messages based on factors like autobiography, history, local context, culture, language/symbol systems, power relations, and immediate personal needs" and suggests that "we should assume that meanings listeners create in their minds will probably not be identical to those intended by the receiver."[102]

Messaging, signaling, and engagement are all important for strategic communication. In fact, much of the agitation around the use of these different terms would likely disappear if various stakeholders accepted them as part of a crawl, walk, run, progression. First, we must master the coordination and deconfliction of our messaging; then, we can add in mastery of the coordination and integration of the signals our actions and policies generate. Finally, we can master engagement, long-term relationships, and further complexity and nuance in influence. Not that we can't begin to improve in all of these areas simultaneously, but we've got to start somewhere! What I would include and where in a crawl, walk, run progression for strategic communication is detailed in chapter 6.

Competing Goals for Strategic Communication

One of the main reasons for disagreement over the definition of strategic communication is genuine disagreement about what it is that a given definer intends for strategic communication to accomplish. As scholar John Robert Kelley notes, strategic communication and "public diplomacy [are] bedeviled by evidence of competing goals."[103] There are disagreements about what is really trying to be accomplished, the primary modes of pursuit, about timelines, about modes. With a host of offered goals, Kelley asks, "How are practitioners to decide which goal takes precedence?"

Further muddying the waters, many of the offered goals are not mutually exclusive. Different proponents want strategic communication to support several of these candidate goals but offer different sets or emphasize different specific goals as primary. In what follows, I distill and discuss the various possible goals for strategic communication (and public diplomacy) that vie for primacy.

Goal: National Objectives

Many proponents want strategic communication explicitly connected to national objectives, national strategy, or national political interest. This is what makes strategic communication "strategic."[104] This is the official DoD position, as laid out clearly in the 2009 *Report on Strategic Communication:*

> From a DoD perspective, "strategic communication priorities" are not separate and distinct from national or Department policy objectives. DoD's strategic communication process is designed to support USG and DoD policy goals; thus, the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and DoD Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF) provide the overarching policy objectives and planning guidance for DoD during the SC process.[105]

Goal: Supporting Operational Objectives

Other proponents accept that strategic communication must support national objectives but want to explicitly connect strategic communication to subordinate or nested policy goals at the operational (or even tactical) level. For example, if U.S. national objectives include defeating the insurgency in Afghanistan while promoting independent and legitimate indigenous government, then strategic communication can be used to support subordinate operational objectives in Kandahar or Lashkar. These subordinate operational objectives could be called desired information effects without significantly changing the

meaning. The *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy* follows this nested line of argument when it declares:

> Using the term "strategic" communication naturally brings a mistaken intuition that it resides only at the strategic level. However, every level of command needs a strategy for coordinating and synchronizing themes, messages, images, and actions in support of SC-related objectives and ensuring the integrity and consistency of themes and messages to the lowest tactical level. This strategy must be coordinated with those above, below and adjacent in order to deliver a mutually supporting communication to the intended audiences.[106]

I have argued elsewhere for the coordination of communication of all kinds with other activities in the pursuit of strategic or operational goals.[107] This is not a unique view: a 2008 article in *IOSphere* notes the importance of keeping the definition of strategic communication connected to both the national-level context and kinetic activities and what they communicate.[108]

Goal: Getting the Most of Specific Events/Launches/Rollouts/Specific Policies

Connecting strategic communication to national objectives or to nested operational or tactical objectives implies for most that strategic communication is something you do (or should be doing) all the time.

The United Kingdom has focused their strategic communication apparatus efforts on building support for specific policies.[109] Their approach recognizes that specific policies nest within broader national goals but also recognizes that resources for communication are not unlimited and coordinating in support of specific policy goals gives them the best chance of demonstrable impact for measureable spending.[110] Similarly, one of the goals for strategic communication or public diplomacy offered by Dr. Kristin Lord is "informing, engaging, and persuading foreign publics in support of specific policies."[111] This could comfortably be interpreted as corresponding to either the pursuit of national objectives or operational objectives (per the previous two goals).

The current U.S. government interagency structure for strategic communication includes the Global Engagement Directorate in the National Security Council (NSC).[112] In 2009 and 2010, this staff has worked to coordinate themes and messages in support of specific major policy initiatives across the interagency community (to include major players like the Department of Defense and the State Department, but also including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Treasury Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Intelligence Community). So far, these efforts have been tied to specific rollouts, launches, or events. Coordination ensures that all stakeholder and related organizations are aware of the

upcoming event and its timing, and have a chance to weigh in with concern or possible conflicts. Representatives from different government agencies contribute to communication planning and receive information about the policy or event, along with supporting themes and messages supporting the event to push out to line communicators in their organization.

It is unclear whether this NSC support for rollouts and events is the desired end state or if the Global Engagement Directorate's current activities are a step on the "crawl, walk, run" progression.

Promoting Long-Term Positive Trends

In sharp contrast with strategic communication goals that are explicitly connected to national goals, nested operational goals, or specific policies or events, there are a handful of different possible goals that focus on creating positive contexts over the long-term. I divide this set of goals into five subcategories: creating and maintaining credibility, promotion of shared values, promotion of American values, improving the general image of the United States, and those who explicitly reject one or more of those general goals. Each is described below.

Goal: Credibility

One of the long-term goals offered for strategic communication and public diplomacy is the generation and creation of credibility. Part of the reason for this emphasis is the low baseline credibility of the United States. "We concur that America has an image problem. Most notably, the United States' credibility is suffering."[113]

One of the four specific goals called out in the DoD 2009 *Report on Strategic Communication* is "*Improve U.S. credibility and legitimacy.*"[114] Numerous other studies and articles decry the need to increase credibility.

One scholar suggests that the importance of credibility is a relatively recent development and is a product of the contemporary information environment. Previously, "persuasion was tied to the manipulation of information."[115] Now, "persuasion appears tied to establishing one's credibility, providing valuable information, and gaining audience trust and confidence."[116] The argument extends to suggest that while strategic communication and public diplomacy that focuses on listening is a good start, there is more to do: "While 'more ears than mouth' may counter the U.S. image problem, U.S. public diplomacy has a much more serious problem. It has a credibility deficit of global proportions."[117] Major Cliff Gilmore argues that in conflicts where populations impact the outcome "both trust and credibility are essential to military success: if either one collapses, the mission will predictably fail."[118] I myself have highlighted the criticality of credibility to effectively influence campaigns elsewhere.[119]

Note that credibility can and should be distinguished from legitimacy or acceptability. Credibility is really about believability; there is a difference between statements of policy that are credible and believable and policies that are legitimate and governments whose policies are widely accepted. As Professor Bruce Gregory pointed out to me, "I can believe you are credible in your intent to do something that I deeply dislike without thinking that what you intend to do is legitimate."[120] Credibility can certainly support legitimacy, but it does not automatically do so.

Goal: Promote Shared Values

Another long-term goal offered for strategic communication or public diplomacy is the promotion of shared values. Many scholars have indicated that strategic communication or public diplomacy should be about demonstrating shared values and respect through policies and the explanations of those policies.[121] Two of the five specific "strategic objectives" that Dr. Kristin Lord offers for public diplomacy in her 2008 Brookings report fit within this broader goal:

- creating a climate of mutual understanding, respect, and trust in which cooperation is more feasible
- encouraging support for shared values—whether environmental protection, the rule of law, support for free markets, or the illegitimacy of suicide bombing—that support American interests[122]

Shared values is one of three strategic objectives listed in the 2007 *National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*: "America must work to nurture common interests and values between Americans and peoples of different countries, cultures and faiths across the world."[123]

In my mind, shared values are an intermediate step toward achieving some other objective. Shared values certainly increase the likelihood of international understanding, or sympathy, or of perceptions that different groups share more in common with us than they might have previously thought. Only good can come of shared values.

However, this again raises the question, are strategic communication and public diplomacy meant to produce enablers and general good, or are they meant to produce specific strategic results? Some would be perfectly happy for engagement in this area to produce unspecified and untargeted international shared values, which could then be leveraged by traditional state to state diplomacy, or lead to generally decreased resistance to U.S. policies, or just less dislike for the United States or her people.

Perhaps this is the crux of the relationship between strategic communication and public diplomacy? Perhaps public diplomacy is about the unspecific

promotion of shared values and mutual understanding, and strategic communication is an umbrella over public diplomacy (and other forms of signaling) that overlaps public diplomacy only to the extent that public diplomacy connects to specific national or operational goals? I guess that would be a fine understanding of the relationship if everyone agreed to it. Unfortunately, there is not a clear consensus on the matter (hence, this section, and this book).

Goal: Promote American Values

Similar to the promotion of shared values is the promotion of American values. Cynically, this can be viewed as the jingoistic version of shared values: we want to promote shared values by encouraging *them* to share *our* values. This view diverges from the promotion of shared values to the extent that it emphasizes simply advertising that American values are decent, good, and generally positive and worth supporting. In that, it shares much in common with the view that "to know us is to love us" as discussed in the next subsection.

Here are couple examples of advocacy for this goal. First, the 2007 *National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication* indicates that all public diplomacy and strategic communication activities should

- underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being;
- reach out to those who share our ideals;
- support those who struggle for freedom and democracy; and
- counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression.[124]

These four points taken together are a combination of promotion of American values, promotion of share values, and countering adversary efforts and ideologies (described later in its own subsection).

In elaborating the role of public diplomacy and strategic communication, that same 2007 strategy document offers this as one of three strategic objectives: "America must offer a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in our most basic values."[125]

Second, Price B. Floyd, former principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, writing before his appointment to that post, criticized the State Department's public-diplomacy efforts during the George W. Bush administration for "trying to sell a product—in this case, a foreign policy, instead of promoting American values."[126] The implication is that the right way to be proceeding, and the correct goal for public diplomacy, is the promotion of American values.

Goal: Improve the General Image of the United States ("To Know Us Is to Love Us")

Quite related to the promotion of American values but presupposing how American values are to be shared and exactly what the positive consequences will be are those who assert that "to know us is to love us"[127] and want to focus public diplomacy and strategic communication on telling the American story.[128] A 2007 GAO report contrasts UK efforts in strategic communication with efforts by the Department of State that aim primarily to "help improve the general image of the United States."[129]

Dr. Kristin Lord offers a milder version of this goal as one of her five goals for public diplomacy:

> Promoting understanding of America, its institutions, values, and people in all their complexity in order to, at a minimum, help publics to put information about the United States in proper context and—more ambitiously—enhance our nation's appeal.[130]

When presented as one of a suite of goals and as a suggestion that improved understanding might provide foreign audiences context or might improve perceptions of the United States, this seems quite reasonable. Unfortunately, entirely too many imagine that public diplomacy is and should be nothing more than the broadcast of the American story. This view makes a significant assumption about what the problem is: they (whoever "they" happen to be) don't know enough about us/understand us. And a significant assumption about what the solution is: if they knew us better, they would like us and accept our policies. This view naïvely ignores any possible stake "they" may have in the matter, any need to understand "their" values or stories, or the possibility that "they" know us quite well and just don't find us or our policies (or our values?) to be attractive.

While promoting understanding (especially two-way understanding) and seeking to improve the general image of the United States may make a reasonable addition to a portfolio of goals for strategic communication and public diplomacy (as Dr. Lord advocates), it is not well suited to be a singular, or even primary, goal.

NOT "To Know Us Is to Love Us"

While much of the debate over goals for strategic communication and public diplomacy concerns priority (is it more important to promote shared values, or support operational objectives?) or boundaries (is it fair to say that strategic communication is about supporting national objectives and public diplomacy is about promoting shared values?), some contend that goals specified

by others are not just lower priorities but are faulty goals. "To know us is to love us" is heavily criticized. For example, distinguished influence historian Professor Philip Taylor cries out against "the undermining philosophy behind contemporary U.S. public diplomacy, . . . namely that 'to know us is to love us' and that being attractive is sufficient to make others want to be like you."[131]

He is not alone in this criticism of "to know us is to love us" thinking. Stefanie Babst argues strenuously that influencing and engaging must go "beyond improving a nation's brand."[132] Professor Philip Seib, director of the Center on Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California, extends the criticism to what he calls "an 'advertising' approach to public diplomacy ('We are wonderful! Love us!')."[133]

Others support the goal of bolstering the U.S. image but insist on other efforts too. Kristin Lord has promotion of the understanding of America as just one of her five goals for public diplomacy. Roy Schmadeka allows bolstering the U.S. image in his vision of strategic communication but prefers to put more emphasis on pushing toward the "popular rejection of violent totalitarian ideology" and by "concentrating efforts on diminishing the widespread appeal and acceptance of extremism."[134]

There is a fine line between promoting engagement, shared values, or understanding, and just advertising the American story. The former is *part* of a thought-out approach to public diplomacy and strategic communication; the latter is a naïve vanity based on faulty assumptions.

Goal: Consideration of Information and Communication

One of the goals offered for strategic communication is that it simply promotes awareness of, attention to, and consideration of the information and communication implications of government and military actions and utterances. This desire to have those schooled in communication (or at least having a communication mind-set) present and involved in planning processes dates back practically to the dawn of the phrase "strategic communication." As the famous quip by Edward R. Murrow, the first director of the United States Information Agency, mentioned in chapter 1, when he was called in to help with damage control after the 1961 invasion at the Bay of Pigs, "If they want me in on the crash landings, I better damn well be in on the take-offs."[135] A more contemporary criticism of the usual way of doing business accuses leaders of applying what Professor Anthony Pratkanis calls "the *sprinkles* approach to public diplomacy—images, photo-ops, and slogans are sprinkled on top of foreign policy and international actions to make those policies and actions taste sweeter and smell better."[136] He advocates instead that we move toward "an approach that integrates public diplomacy concerns into overall foreign policy and objectives."[137]

How much easier would intentionality for and integration of messages and signals be if commanders and policymakers always stopped and asked, "now, what kind of message is this going to send?" before taking an action or launching a policy?

R. S. Zaharna advocates exactly that and highlights the need "to critically assess U.S. policies from the audience's vantage point and red-flag two types of policies: those that appear to contradict stated U.S. values and those that negatively affect the public in some way. Aggressive communication in a political environment where U.S. policy appears to contradict its values—or where U.S. policies negatively affect the public—will heighten perceptions of duplicity and lower U.S. credibility."[138]

Promotion of this kind of role for strategic communication abounds. The DoD 2009 Report on Strategic Communication advances several goals for the coordinating process that tie directly to the goal of ensuring consideration of information implications of policies and actions "to ensure that:

> Cultural, informational, and communication considerations are part of strategy, planning, and policy development from the very beginning (rather than as afterthoughts);
> The potential communication impacts of both kinetic and non-kinetic actions—their likely "perception effects"—are assessed and planned for before the actions are taken;
> Our words and our actions are consistent and mutually reinforcing (closing the "say-do" gap); and
> "Soft power" options and capabilities are given equal priority and considered in coordination with hard power alternatives."[139]

Goal: Information Superiority or Information Dominance

Another possible goal for strategic communication comes from the military information operations tradition, with roots back to command and control warfare before the turn of the century. This goal is "information superiority" or "information dominance."

Information superiority survives in joint doctrine and is defined there as "the operational advantage derived from the ability to collect, process, and disseminate an uninterrupted flow of information while exploiting or denying an adversary's ability to do the same."[140] As discussed above with regard to information operations, this view is much more clearly aligned with competing OODA loops than it is with influence.

Information dominance was originally an alternative term for information superiority. In fact, a white paper from 1997 debates the merits of the two terms as objectives for information operations and concludes that information dominance is the better term.[141] The logic for that conclusion

is that simple *superiority* implies a minimum threshold of 51 percent versus 49 percent advantage over an adversary, where *dominance* varies based on operational objectives and is what you want to achieve in order to have an unambiguous advantage in the information domain.

Even though information superiority won out in the late 1990s, information dominance has had its resurgence with the marriage of the Navy's N-2 (intelligence) with N-6 (communications) as the new Navy Center for Information Dominance.[142] Again, this use of the concept focuses on things other than influence. Intelligence is about gathering, processing, and preparing information to support other operations. Communications as a traditional military function is about ensuring the ability to make (and the security of) transmissions of information between military units.

Information superiority or information dominance might enable strategic communication by ensuring the friendly force has the data necessary to plan influence efforts and is aware of and can react to changes in the information environment or new adversary influence efforts that might need to be countered. Information superiority/dominance differs from strategic communication in at least two critical ways. First, superiority and dominance seek operational advantages through the ability to collect and flow information; strategic communication seeks advantages based on the *content* of the information disseminated and the impact (the information effects) that content has. Put another way, strategic communication is more about the message; information superiority is more about the means. Second, information superiority and dominance are both relative to someone: superior to whom? dominant over whom? An adversary. Strategic communication can be conducted independent of an adversary, and, more importantly, can be assessed independent of an adversary. Information superiority can only be conceived of as a competition with an adversary. Strategic communication can be discussed in that light (war of ideas, etc.) or can be considered in a nonzero-sum way (marketplace of ideas).

A final term that sometimes gets thrown in the mix with information dominance and information superiority is "information management." Information management is "the function of managing an organization's information resources by the handling of knowledge acquired by one or many different individuals and organizations in a way that optimizes access by all who have a share in that knowledge or a right to that knowledge."[143] Like information superiority, information management is focused internally and is about getting the right information to the right personnel. One way to achieve information superiority would be to be so good at information management that an adversary just can't keep up. Information superiority, however, under a C2W construct, usually involves efforts to adversely impact enemy information flows or processes, and such actions would clearly not

be information management. None of the three (information management, superiority, or dominance) are synonymous with (or even substantially overlapping) strategic communication.

Competing Goals: Inform versus Educate

Another tension in goals for strategic communication and public diplomacy concerns the time horizon of desired outcomes. Dr. Tony Corn tells us that "in the field of Public Diplomacy, it has long been customary to distinguish between 'fast media' and 'slow media', short-term and long-term communication, i.e. information activities and education activities."[144] This general temporal concern certainly applies to strategic communication as well. Whatever goals we hope to pursue with strategic communication, are they immediate, short-term, or long-term goals?

Different goals imply different time horizons. Almost by definition, goals under the rubric of long-term trends (credibility, promotion of shared values, etc.) clearly take a long view, as does support of national strategic objectives. Supporting operational objectives or specific policies likely takes a more short- or medium-term view, either begun in anticipate of a new policy, or over the span that a policy is being introduced or implemented. Countering adversary efforts (which will be discussed below) could take on multiple time horizons: a long-term campaign to promote alternative ideologies or responses as close to immediate as possible to refute erroneous or fallacious claims.

John Robert Kelley offers three categories of activity (information, influence, and engagement, as described above in the subsection "Influence versus Inform versus Communicate"), which themselves imply three different timelines. Kelley's information is short term, influence is longer term, and engagement is even longer term.[145]

Certainly strategic communication could embrace all of these goals and all of these timelines. Which should be emphasized and in what proportion varies by different visions of strategic communication and public diplomacy.

Competing Goals: Inform versus Relationships

Several of the tensions above between different goals or between different possible timelines boil down to beliefs about what communication can accomplish and how it works best.

One scholar concludes that most public-diplomacy advocates have one of two views: "One perspective tends to view communication as a linear process of transferring information often with the goal of persuasion or control. The other perspective sees communication as a social process of building relationships and fostering harmony."[146]

how we think about them ourselves. Thinking about ideas and persuasion with this militaristic metaphor leads to faulty thinking and analogy making. Ideas don't fight each other.

The most effective way to persuade someone to adopt a new point of view is not to attack their current perspective. Ideas can compete, but the logic such competition follows cannot be accurately characterized as "war."

People receive and wholly or partially accept, reject, or ignore ideas. They modify their preexisting views by adding acceptable aspects of a new idea. Contradictions and conflicts between ideas are worked out in people's heads or in public (or private, or semipublic, as on the Internet) discourse with others—not on a battlefield. Removing the martial metaphor might reduce implied antagonism and polarizing pressure to be "either with us or against us."

A further problem with "war of ideas" is that it camouflages the nature of the thinkers involved. Wars traditionally involve two antagonists. In the "war of ideas" these are usually imputed to be "us" versus "them," where "we" are the noble proponents of peace, freedom, love, democracy, and Western values and "they" are the spiteful extremist ideologues who advocate violence and hate.

Even if we move past these simple implicit caricatures of the two sides, we've ignored the battlefield—the minds of the people of the world, the audiences, the perceivers and believers—the very people we hope to win over. Effectiveness in this policy area requires attention not only to the ideas and those who perpetrate them but also to those who might come to accept them and be influenced by them.

An ideal metaphorical analogy would not be militaristic, nor would it mischaracterize the process or its participants. I propose instead that we seek to be active participants in the marketplace of ideas. A marketplace of ideas allows for competition and for a desire to promote the sale of ideas that support our objectives but it respects the role of the buyers in the marketplace: the citizens, populations, and publics who we hope will come to share ideas consonant with ours.

Thinking framed by this analogy allows shoppers to buy bits of ideas from multiple sources and assemble their own holistic set of perceptions and beliefs, while finding their own ways to resolve contradictions. We need not defeat detrimental ideas. Rather, we aim to make bestsellers of the ideas that bolster our cause. Customer feedback will let us know when potential buyers don't like what we're selling. Unattractive products will fade away as their market share decreases—without anyone engaging them in battle.

The marketplace metaphor innately suggests many approaches to resolving ideologically based policy barriers that we have already discovered: a focus on understanding foreign audiences and debates, recognition of the two-way

nature of communication, the importance of truth and credibility, and the benefits of free press and freedom of expression. New foreign policies might gain broader acceptance if more thought and effort were put into how their explanations will fare in the marketplace of ideas.

It is important to remember that we do have enemies participating in this marketplace. We can still actively oppose our enemies and their harmful ideas without letting the way we talk about doing so insult consumers of those ideas or the actual processes by which ideas spread and change.

Similarly, I'm none too keen on the hackneyed "winning hearts and minds." This Vietnam- era phrase is often used as shorthand for what we must be trying to accomplish with our efforts to inform, influence, and persuade foreign audiences. Talk about "winning hearts and minds" tends to excuse the speaker from being more specific about what they actually hope to accomplish. Far better to choose and then clearly admit to pursuing one of the possible goals as articulated earlier in this chapter, or some specific information effect.

A Vision for Strategic Communication

All of this leads toward a vision of strategic communication. For me, strategic communication is coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives. Strategic communication is a shared responsibility, where all involved understand that their actions and utterances communicate and are mindful of their contribution (neutral, positive, or negative) to broader strategic-communication goals.

Strategic communication doesn't seek to have everyone in government speaking with the same voice, or repeating the same three talking points (like automatons), but to have everyone speaking in the same direction and avoiding orthogonal and contradictory utterances and behaviors. This goal can't be achieved simply through better management but requires more fully shared responsibility. This must be both bottom up and top down. Bottom up in that all involved think about the communication implications of their actions and utterances and seek help when they exceed their ability to recognize the communications implications of their plans, or how planned actions and utterances relate to broader strategic-communication goals. Top down in that senior strategists establish clearly articulated communication-related objectives with measureable outcomes and/or clear subordinate/supporting objectives down to the operational level.

In my vision of strategic communication, all soliders, sailors, airmen, and marines are effective public diplomats because in their interactions with publics, they know and can say both what we (the United States) are doing in

a given operation (and why) but also know (and can say) how what they individually do on a day-to-day basis connects to that broader operational goal, all in their own words. If we believe that our men and women in uniform and in the rest of government are intelligent, competent people (and we do), then we need to both empower them and support them with clearly articulated objectives as part of strategic communication.

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CHAPTER 3

History of Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication

> Tools of persuasion and inspiration were indispensable to the outcome of the defining ideological struggle of the 20th century. I believe that they are just as indispensable in the 21st century—and maybe more so.
>
> —Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates[1]

The term "strategic communication" didn't come into widespread use until after the turn of the century. Its related or antecedent terms go back a bit further (most date public diplomacy to 1965), the informing principles, further still. This chapter offers a broad history of what might now be called strategic communication or public diplomacy in the United States.

Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication before Anyone Was Using Those Terms

Tradition attributes the phrase and conceptualization of "public diplomacy" to Ambassador Edmund Gullion, dean of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University in 1965.[2] Core practices of public diplomacy date back to ancient times and appear periodically in subsequent world history. Consider, for example, that

> the Roman Republic invited the sons of neighbouring kings to be educated in Rome; the great library in Alexandria, constructed by the Greeks, offered special training programmes for scholars from across the ancient world; Napoleon, when he invaded Egypt, planned to order the entire French army to convert to Islam to help establish the French rule, and Churchill successfully presented the largest empire the world had ever known as a lucky underdog to win over U.S. hearts and minds.[3]

American public diplomacy also has a lengthy pedigree. It has been argued that the first act of the American Revolution, the writing of the Declaration of Independence, was an unambiguous exercise in public diplomacy, explaining the new nation to global publics.[4]

Strategic communication is a much younger term of art. The earliest use of which I am aware of strategic communication in the way we are using it here can be found in the 2001 *Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination.*[5] The chair of the task force, Vincent Vitto, has asserted responsibility for the term to me in personal conversation and also candidly admits to perhaps having been too clever by half with that particular turn of phrase, given some of the lexical challenges highlighted in chapter 2.

Despite the robust role in American history of what would now be called public diplomacy or strategic communication, the United States has not always embraced or actively sought to conduct such activities. Public diplomacy scholar Philip Seib is one of several scholars to note a general American discomfort with these acts, perhaps equating them with propaganda (see the discussion of propaganda in the previous chapter). Seib notes that the United States has deployed strategic communication or public-diplomacy-like capabilities only in times of dire need, such as during the aforementioned revolution, during the civil war, or during the world wars, quickly dismantling any such apparatus when the crisis has passed.[6] The early history of U.S. public diplomacy, then, is punctuated and usually associated with war.

Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication during the World Wars

World War I saw President Woodrow Wilson establish the Committee on Public Information (the Creel Committee.)[7] This was the United States' first significant effort to disseminate information broadly to both foreign and domestic public audiences. At its inception, the Creel Committee was officially tasked with countering German propaganda. However, as the war wore on and committee activities expanded, these activities began to be perceived as propaganda and censorship in their own right.[8] Shortly after the end of the war the committee was disbanded, but American skepticism about such efforts remained.

The Office of War Information (OWI) was created June 13, 1942, by President Franklin Roosevelt.[9] The OWI used photos to provide domestic and foreign audiences with war news, and information about U.S. policies and war-time activities.[10] "Using . . . photographs and captions with emotional content, the OWI aimed to inspire patriotic fervor in the American public."[11] OWI products included posters, press releases, radio programs, and ultimately movies through their Bureau of Motion Pictures.[12]

One of the most enduring acts of the OWI was the establishment in 1942 of the Voice of America (VoA). VoA continues to provide news and other content around the world to this day. Early VoA broadcasts transmitted war news to areas in conflict in the South Pacific, in occupied Europe, and in

North Africa. The very first VoA broadcast began with the famous statement: "Daily at this time, we shall speak to you about America and the war. The news may be good or bad. We shall tell you the truth."[13] This early commitment to truth created and contributed to the maintenance of credibility which still serves the VOA today.

In 1945, President Harry Truman abolished the OWI.[14] However, the same executive order that closed OWI transferred its international information functions, including the VoA, to the Department of State.[15]

The Cold War: Heyday of Strategic-Communication and Public Diplomacy

American strategic communication and public diplomacy followed an initial trajectory closely linked to the transition in the postwar period into the Cold War. Political warfare expert Lowell Schwartz notes, for example, that U.S. information efforts under President Truman went through three distinct stages. First, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, there was a series of decisions that dismantled most U.S. capabilities, overt and covert, related to psychological warfare.[16] The second stage coincided with the dawn of the Cold War, and included the development of new capabilities to realize George Kennan's plan of "political warfare" against the Soviet Union (described in greater detail below).[17] The third stage saw the propagandistic "campaign of truth" realized as "a virtual crusade against communism."[18]

The Cold War was fought in the context of mutually assured destruction with nuclear weapons and conventional conflict largely constrained to plausibly deniable covert operations or conflict by proxy. The conflict swirled in the realm of ideology and influence. The Cold War was made for strategic communication and public diplomacy, and the United States was up to the task.

As public diplomacy scholar Matt Armstrong describes:

> In 1948, George Kennan developed a plan for "organized political warfare" to counter the Soviet Union's growing power and influence. To be effective, it required the United States to employ all means possible to achieve its national objective, including overt activities such as political alliances, economic measures, and "white" propaganda, to covert operations such as clandestine support of foreign elements, "black" psychological warfare, to encouraging underground resistance movement in hostile states. This was not the "diplomacy in public" we know today, but a full-spectrum "diplomacy with publics" that engaged people at all levels and with all means available.[19]

The Cold War saw a proliferation of U.S. information capabilities. One of these was the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), established in 1950. While

the roles and the authorities of the PSB were hotly contested, PSB personnel wanted the psychological operations under their purview to include "every significant action in the field of foreign affairs by any government agency that had an effect upon the minds and wills of men."[20] This sounds suspiciously like some contemporary conceptions of strategic communication. Another of the organizations the Cold War birthed and charged with coordinating and executing what we would now call public diplomacy in this era was the United States Information Agency (USIA). In 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower established the USIA to conduct international informational activities and exchange programs in support of foreign policy.[21] The agency's chartered mission was "to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions, and their counterparts abroad."[22] Stated goals were

- to explain and advocate U.S. policies in terms that are credible and meaningful in foreign cultures;
- to provide information about the official policies of the United States, and about the people, values and institutions which influence those policies;
- to bring the benefits of international engagement to American citizens and institutions by helping them build strong long-term relationships with their counterparts overseas;
- to advise the President and U.S. government policy-makers on the ways in which foreign attitudes will have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of U.S. policies.[23]

USIA took over responsibility for and management of VoA but used other media as well, including initiating personal contacts, libraries, book and pamphlet publication and distribution, motion pictures, television programs, exhibits, and instruction in the English language.[24] Many USIA activities became the foundation of what is now called public diplomacy.

The year 1953 also saw the birth of Radio Liberation (later Radio Liberty) as one of several public-private partnerships seeking to influence the people of the Soviet Union. "Radio Liberation's (RL) broadcasts in Russian and other native languages of the Soviet Union provided an alternative news source over short-wave radio for Soviet citizens. RL presented itself as what a national radio station would sound like if it came from a free country."[25] While funded primarily by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Radio Liberty functioned very much independently, had its own strategy, and provided a significantly different perspective than that provided by the VoA.

Significantly, the VoA, Radio Liberty, and various other period information activities *all had strategies*.[26] Matt Armstrong argues that these efforts were better focused and undertaken in greater earnest early in the Cold War.[27] When both the extent of the threat from communism and our ability to counter it were unknown, American proto-public diplomacy was

"a comprehensive effort to both understand and affect the behavior of individuals and groups through engagement and discourse," he argues.[28]

Even early cultural diplomacy (known as cultural infiltration at the time) had a specific set of medium- and long-term goals relative to the Soviet Union.[29] This stands in contrast to many contemporary cultural diplomacy efforts, which tend either to fail to state goals, or to have the vaguest of long-term objectives.

While Armstrong praises the focus achieved in early Cold War strategic communication and public diplomacy, he goes on to argue that once the threat posed by the Soviet Union became better known and more broadly understood (or at least accepted), public diplomacy "devolved" into a passive approach to influence, a "neutered beauty contest relying on cultural exchanges and press releases in the naïve hope that increased knowledge and understanding breed love for the United States."[30] This, argues Armstrong, is where American public diplomacy remains. This highlights tensions surrounding different goals for strategic communication and public diplomacy, with Armstrong making the argument that historically, effective public diplomacy was more about engagement and more about supporting specific policy objectives, while later (and contemporary) public diplomacy was more about increase audience and hoping to improve the general perception of the United States.

Armstrong is not alone in his view that early Cold War information efforts were more effective. For example, in 2005 a U.S. Army major noted that "historically, the strongest periods of USG strategic influence had several common features" which include permanent organizations, specific charters outlining roles and responsibilities for these organizations, full-time staffs, and interest and guidance from the highest level.[31]

After the Cold War

Whether or not you accept the argument that the conduct of American public diplomacy changed during the course of the Cold War, and whether or not you believe that change was for the worse, the Cold War did mature and institutionalize the practice of public diplomacy. The end of the Cold War saw the United States with an established USIA, practicing public diplomacy under that name, with robust broadcast and production capabilities (to include the VoA) in its portfolio.

When the Cold War ended, the people of the United States looked for the "peace dividend," seeking a shrinking military and the reduction of (or elimination) of many of the tools that had helped to win the Cold War. These cuts did not spare the tools of public diplomacy and strategic communication.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought about a diminished role for USIA and sparked ever decreasing budgets and resources for the

agency through the 1990s.[12] Substantial programs, such as academic and cultural exchanges, book translation, binational learning centers abroad, and American libraries were cut.[13] The International Broadcasting Act of 1994 created the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), effectively separating broadcasting functions from USIA. Foreign broadcasting, including VOA, was assigned to the new agency.

Finally, the Foreign Affairs Agencies Consolidation Act of 1998 abolished USIA and transferred USIA's remaining functions to the Department of State.[14] There, USIA's remnants were divided and partitioned among Department of State's geographic and functional bureaus, losing what coherence and unity of purpose remained.[15]

Stephen Johnson, Helle Dale, and Patrick Cronin describe the consequences of USIA being folded into DOS:

> Although it made economic sense, the merger created disarray. Negotiators unfamiliar with USIA's mission carved up the agency and placed regional divisions under the authority of the State Department's geographic bureaus and buried support functions within the State Department's functional divisions without much regard for outcome. USIA's public opinion research office was placed in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), outside the hierarchy of communications professionals who need its analysis the most. Most of all, USIA's proactive communicators and creative personnel were dropped haphazardly into a bureaucracy that values secrecy and a deliberative clearance process. Career State Department officers consider it a good day when no one makes news—the opposite of classic public affairs (PA) and public diplomacy practice.[16]

The Cold War was over, and conventional wisdom held that Western ideology had triumphed over communism. The U.S. was the tired hegemon and had little need for public diplomacy. Strategic communication was not yet a term of art but would have received little attention had it been available.

Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication after 9/11

And then . . . the attacks of September 11, 2001. Just a few scant years after American public diplomacy had "lost its leadership and organizational integrity" a new iteration of ideological competition came crashing into the American consciousness.[17]

In the wake of these attacks, the BBG and the DoD have tried to fill the void.[18] Absent USIA and with their mission spread throughout the State Department, many observers have called for increased resources for public diplomacy and strategic communication, along with a host of other proposals to improve effectiveness, increase capacity, or enable better coordination of

U.S. government efforts to inform, influence, or persuade. These proposals are discussed in some detail in chapter 6.

Several initiative, reforms, or new structures have been added (or at least tried).[39] Within weeks of 9/11, the DoD established the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI).[40] Just a few months later (February 2002), a disgruntled Pentagon public affairs officer leaked the existence of the OSI to the press, along with allegations that the office intended to engage in and support misleading propaganda.[41] The OSI was closed before it really began work. The year 2002 also saw the establishment of the Strategic Communication Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) established under the leadership of the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy. In 2006, the Strategic Communication PCC was replaced by the PCC for Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy. The year 2006 also saw the formation of two new strategic-communication-related offices in DoD: the Office of Joint Communication, and the Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG).[42] While the Office of Joint Communication is still functioning, the SCIG was allowed to expire unceremoniously in 2008.[43] The year 2007 saw the Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy PCC release the first National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication.[44] The year 2008 saw the establishment of the Strategic Engagement Center, soon renamed Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC), at the Department of State. In 2009, the National Security Council (NSC) added a Global Engagement Directorate.

Strategic communication and public diplomacy are still on the move. Literally stacks of reports, white papers, Op-Eds, and articles have been written regarding needs, or suggestions for improvement, in this area. Many of these recommendations are discussed in chapter 6. The 111th Congress has several pieces of legislation with strategic-communication or public- diplomacy relevance under consideration.[45] These include the Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2010, a long-overdue update of the 1948 act whose pre-global information environment perspective causes several problems for contemporary strategic communication efforts.[46]

21st-Century Efforts Plagued by Missteps and Failures

While much has been done in the realm of strategic communication and public diplomacy since September 11, 2001, not all of it has worked, and there is more to be done. As clearly indicated in chapter 1, strategic communication is critical and is an area in which we are struggling. As a 2005 Heritage Foundation report notes:

> While overseas opinion polls show mostly negative views of the United States, the State Department's communications machinery remains in

> disarray. Congressional funding for public diplomacy programs has increased only slightly since 9/11, interagency coordination remains minimal, and America's foreign communication efforts lack a focused strategy.[47]

This section briefly reviews some of the less successful efforts or attempts in this area.

In the Department of State, while public diplomacy is receiving greater emphasis, progress has been made in fits and starts. One clear indicator of this is the frequency with which the position of the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs has suffered from long periods of vacancy since the turn of the century. Between January 20 2000, and May 26, 2009, the position was vacant for 1,208 days, more than 3.3 years, roughly 35 percent of the time.[48]

In the Department of Defense, there have been some notable shortcomings as well. First, and most well publicized, is the failure of the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) before it even really got started. The purpose of the OSI was to synchronize DoD public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations (especially psychological operations) in a way that corresponds quite closely with the core concepts of strategic communication.[49] Instead, because it had the word "influence" in its office title (as discussed in the previous chapter, "influence" is often perceived as a dirty word) and because it ran afoul of "rice bowl" tensions between information operations and public affairs, it came under attack internally.[50] This internal dispute became external when a disgruntled public-affairs officer leaked allegations to the media that the new office was engaged in disseminating disinformation.[51] These allegations led to a quick trial in the court of public opinion, and the office was closed before it even really began to operate.[52]

Coordinating communications and signals within the DoD is particularly challenging. Not only is the department as a whole truly immense, but there are several different organizations within the Office of the Secretary of Defense that have some (and sometimes overlapping) responsibilities for communication. These include the Office of Communication Planning and Integration (formerly the Office of Joint Communication, and part of the larger public-affairs function), the Office of the Undersecretary for Policy, and various offices with responsibility for oversight over information operations.

The Strategic Communication Integration Group (SCIG) was an attempt to encourage coordination between these various communication stakeholders. The SCIG was formal and had a specified high-level membership group. The SCIG charter did not, however, assign any authority or primacy to any of the principal actors involved. A council of equals between three different major communication stakeholders in practice became a venue for personality conflict and petty parochialism. I'm told that any time one of the three

SCIG principals tried to exert authority beyond their traditional organizational purview, the other two would oppose it, either to protect their own equities or simply to spite the other. The SCIG was not an effective body for the conduct of any part of strategic communication, however defined, and was allowed to expire when its authorization ended, providing a cautionary tale about how *not* to organize such a coordinating body.

The Importance of Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy throughout History

Americans are uncomfortable with influence. There are many successful examples of U.S. employment of what would now be called strategic communication or public diplomacy, the Cold War perhaps being the most notable. Whenever the U.S. government has employed these kinds of capabilities (during the Revolution, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Cold War) it has sought to dismantle them when the impelling crisis has passed.[53] Philip Seib argues that "neither the people of the United States nor their Congress have ever been truly comfortable with a government role in communication at home or abroad."[54]

Another open historical question concerns the efficacy of strategic communication and public diplomacy. While the United States did employ information and influence capabilities during the various wars mentioned above, how much did they matter? Historians report broad consensus that U.S. information efforts had significant impacts during both World Wars and during the Cold War. How much, exactly, is both difficult to quantify and subject to debate. No one imagines that influence and persuasion alone can win a war, but it would be naïve to exclude the possible contribution of such efforts to complex multi-causal explanations of historical outcomes.

A RAND study published in 2010 (for which I am the lead author) examined the contribution of what would now be called strategic communication to the outcomes of insurgencies historically. For all of the 30 insurgencies started and concluded worldwide between 1978 and 2008 the study identified the presence or absence of several factors relating to the strategic communication activities of the counterinsurgent force, as well as a host of contextual factors, other practices of the counterinsurgents (or the insurgents), and a variety of controlling factors.[55] The study shows that strategic communication is one of the things that successful counterinsurgents do, and unsuccessful counterinsurgents do not.

The U.S. has used strategic communication and public diplomacy effectively in the past, and must do so again. The contemporary challenge in this arena is greater than ever before, both because of the nature of the threats and because of the complexity of the global information environment. Solutions will need to take strategic communication beyond the practices of

the past. Hopefully, effective and mature strategic communication and public diplomacy capabilities will be developed and will not be dismantled once the American people feel safe once again.

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CHAPTER 4

Who Does Strategic Communication?

> American public diplomacy wears combat boots.
> —Public-Diplomacy and Strategic-Communication Advisor Matt Armstrong[1]

Who does strategic communication? This chapter explores the various players, would-be players, or could-be players in U.S. strategic communication. It begins with the departments discussed as having the primary roles in strategic communication and public diplomacy: the Department of State and the Department of Defense. The major relevant structures of these departments are discussed as is their role or possible role in strategic communication. The chapter then turns to other parts of the government: the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the broader interagency community, the National Security Council (NSC), and the office of the president. After introducing all the players in the executive branch, the chapter concludes with a discussion of broader sources of American information and influence: the Congress, the press, and the American public itself.

Department of State

The Department of State (DOS) is the home of traditional state-to-state relationship management for the United States. These state-to-state relationships are managed through "diplomacy," through the activities of the ambassadors and the foreign service. With the demise of USIA and the attachment of its remaining functions to DOS, State is now also the home of "public diplomacy." Some have argued that this role does not fit well within the DOS ethos or tradition; it is, after all, the *State* Department, charged principally with relationships with other states, not the Department of State and Other Foreign Citizens of Interest or Concern, or even simply the Foreign Ministry

as the equivalent entity is labeled in many European countries. Matt Armstrong has compellingly argued that in order to succeed at public diplomacy (and many of the other tasks in its portfolio) DOS needs to evolve and become both "a Department of State and Non-State."[2]

The State Department appears to agree. Summarizing the 2010 *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (QDDR), Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton indicates that "although traditional diplomacy will always be critical to advancing the United States' agenda, it is not enough. The State Department must expand its engagement to reach and influence wider and more diverse groups using new skills, strategies, and tools. To that end, the department is broadening the way it conceives of diplomacy as well as the roles and responsibilities of its practitioners."[3]

Given the close coupling between public diplomacy and strategic communication, how does DOS relate to strategic communication? Uneasily. Under the Bush administration, DOS became the official interagency lead for strategic communication in 2006.[4] The undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs headed the relevant policy coordinating committee (PCC) and had principal responsibility for strategic communication. Beyond being anointed the lead, the undersecretary had no coercive or tasking authority over various partners in the interagency community that I am aware of. Leadership, to the extent that there was any, took the form of leadership by example, persuasion, and suggestion.[5] Under the Obama administration, State's role in strategic communication is less clear. The PCC has been replaced by the Global Engagement and Strategic Communication Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) and is now headed by the National Security Council.[6] While nothing has been taken away from State (or from the undersecretary for public diplomacy), authority for strategic communication has not been reiterated, and the NSC appears to have a much larger role (see the discussion later in the chapter).

But even when DOS unambiguously had a role in strategic communication (even if that role was at times ambiguous), State was still uneasy with strategic communication. Part of that unease stemmed from the institutional preference for traditional diplomacy over public diplomacy and by extension its cousin, strategic communication. However, even among public-diplomacy practitioners in DOS, strategic communication wasn't the preferred name for what they did and what they wanted to do. State is willing to do public diplomacy, but they do not want to do strategic communication. Even if it is the same thing (depending on where you come down in terms of definition—see chapter 2), they want to call it public diplomacy. The good news is, the QDDR calls for an increased emphasis for public diplomacy within DOS. As Secretary Clinton notes, "The QDDR endorses a new public diplomacy strategy that makes public engagement every diplomat's duty, through town-hall

meetings and interviews with the media, organized outreach, events in provincial towns and smaller communities, student exchange programs, and virtual connections that bring together citizens and civic organizations."[7]

Current Organization and Structure

The authorities under which the DOS engages in public diplomacy stem from four acts of Congress: the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956, the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948, the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, and the U.S. International Broadcasting Act of 1994.[8] A detailed examination of these laws and authorities is beyond the scope of this work. I will, however, describe the structure they have enabled.

State's public-diplomacy efforts are managed by the undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs. The undersecretary's organization, designated "R" inside DOS "is tasked with leading the U.S. government's overall public diplomacy effort, increasing the impact of educational and cultural exchange, and developing and utilizing new technologies to improve the efficiency of public diplomacy programs."[9] Judith McHale has served as the undersecretary from May 26, 2009, until the time of this writing.

Within DOS, three bureaus and two offices report to the undersecretary.[10] These are:

- the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
- the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP)
- the Bureau of Public Affairs (PA)
- the Office of Policy, Planning and Resources (R/PPR)
- the Office of Private Sector Outreach (R/PSO)

ECA, IIP, and PA are the main venues for public-diplomacy efforts.[11] These bureaus engage with, but have no authority over, the functional and regional bureaus within the State Department, in coordinating and integrating policy, communication, and objectives.[12] The functional and regional bureaus constitute the traditional core of DOS, where the real business of the department is conducted.

While ECA, IIP, and PA conduct public diplomacy, R/PPR "provides long-term strategic planning and performance measurement capability for public diplomacy and public affairs programs."[13]

Also reporting to the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs is the Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC). Though housed at State, the GSEC is an interagency organization and includes DOS personnel, DoD personnel, personnel from the National Counterterrorism Center

(NCTC), from the Intelligence Community, and from other government entities involved in strategic communication.[14] The GSEC supports interagency efforts in this area and helps promulgate decisions and objectives throughout DOS and the interagency.[15] "The GSEC operationalizes decisions made by the Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) for Global Engagement."[16]

In September 2010, DOS established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC) under the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs. Though nascent at this writing, the organization aspires to serve as an interagency war room for the coordination of communication in response to significant efforts by extremists in the information domain. When it is not coordinating response to a crisis or adversary onslaught, the steady state activities of the CSCC will include efforts to shape global narratives away from those that favor violent extremism and other strategic-communication or public-diplomacy-type efforts to support the broader counterterrorism mission.

The Department of State's total budget for public diplomacy and strategic communication runs in the neighborhood of $1 billion. In 2008, the total was $501 million for DOS exchange and cultural-affairs programs, and $378 million for nonexchange programs.[17] In 2009, the total amount DOS spent on public diplomacy was just under $1.1 billion, and the 2010 budget request (made in 2009) was for $1.25 billion.[18]

The Department of State has about 3,000 public-diplomacy personnel, the bulk of which (~2300) are in the regional bureaus.[19] These figures include only full-time public diplomacy positions and don't include part-time personnel or locally engaged staff supporting embassies, so constitutes a conservative estimate.

Weaknesses in the Current Structure

The Department of State's execution of the public-diplomacy and strategic-communication mission is often criticized. Some of this criticism must have merit, as under the Bush administration DOS had the lead for strategic communication. If they had done a better job or solved more of the challenges, a book like this one wouldn't need to be written. Here I briefly review some of the significant criticism.

One complaint raised about public diplomacy in the Department of State echoes the concern noted above about State's comfort zone being traditional state-to-state diplomacy. While state-to-state relationships remain important, the rise of transnational security threats, adversaries who are nonstate actors, and the ever-increasing participation of broader publics in the global information environment, the U.S. government needs more than just traditional diplomacy. With the absorption of USIA and the establishment of the

head of public diplomacy as an undersecretary, public diplomacy is explicitly subordinate to (and implicitly less important than) traditional official diplomacy.[20] The complaint extends beyond just the formal authority and rank at the top of the public-diplomacy apparatus and includes concerns about how State assigns personnel to their various career cones, how resources are allocated, and what criteria promotion decisions within the department use.[21] Simply put, public diplomacy is not traditionally a priority (or even much of a consideration) throughout most of the State Department bureaucracy. Further, those who work in public diplomacy are not well regarded by the balance of the institution and do not have access to resources proportionate with the importance of their mission.

Another line of criticism laments the general dysfunction and lack of progress made by the State Department in public diplomacy and strategic communication. William Kiehl asserts that "the Department of State emerged from the 20th century a weaker, less relevant and more ambiguous partner of the Department of Defense and other agencies of national security."[22] Matt Armstrong suggests that the State Department has suffered from "years of neglect and marginalization, as well as a dearth of long-term vision and strategic planning, [that] have left the 19th-century institution hamstrung with fiefdoms and bureaucratic bottlenecks."[23]

The criticism goes beyond the State Department in general and applies to DOS efforts in public diplomacy as well. Information Operations expert Leigh Armistead decries the failure of the public-diplomacy community to move beyond "antiquated tools" for message transmission, and embrace new Internet-based media.[24] Along with this concern, Armistead criticizes the Department of State's tradition-based desire to centralize and retain complete control over their messages, a propensity which leads, he argues, to an information vacuum the enemies of the United States are only too willing to fill.[25] This is an example of straying too close to trying to make government representatives mindless automatons with regard to the messages they disseminate, requiring approval anytime anyone wishes to deviate from preapproved talking points.

These issues are all recognized (at least obliquely) in the 2010 QDDR, and, as described earlier in this chapter by Secretary Clinton, the QDDR proposes reforms to address these and other issues. In addition to the intention to move away from traditional diplomacy to the exclusion of all else and making public diplomacy and engagement the responsibility of every diplomat (as noted earlier), the QDDR also indicates that "the State Department is streamlining and modernizing the way it conceives of and conducts public diplomacy. We are shifting away from traditional platforms and instead are building connections to foreign publics in regions once considered beyond the United States' reach."[26] Future QDDRs will report progress in these areas.

Critics also have expressed concern with the lack of leadership and lack of (or just the low quality of) public-diplomacy strategy from DOS. As noted above, the Undersecretariat for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs was vacant for a substantial fraction of the time since the turn of the century.

The current undersecretary, Judith McHale, released a public-diplomacy strategy document in 2010: *Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World: A Strategic Approach for the 21st Century.*[27] The document is actually just a set of briefing slides, a framework, and modestly describes itself as "the first phase of a process for developing a detailed strategic plan for Public Diplomacy."[28]

Observers and scholars of public diplomacy did not receive this strategy warmly. Professor Steve Corman criticizes the guidance contained in the framework as being unsound because it is based on an outdated "message influence model."[29] He goes on to suggest that the framework misses the point in its efforts to shape the global narrative by rapidly responding to incorrect information because "narratives are not about facts, they are about how facts are framed and interpreted."[30]

Professor Philip Seib pulls no punches and describes the strategy document as a "stunning disappointment."[31] He elaborates:

> It is so lacking in imagination, so narrow in its scope, and so insufficient in its appraisal of the tasks facing U.S. public diplomats that it is impossible to understand why its preparation took so many months.[32]

Others offer more moderate criticism of the document, but beyond hoping that it is a predecessor of something better and more fully developed, few in the community have had much positive to say about *Public Diplomacy: Strengthening U.S. Engagement with the World: A Strategic Approach for the 21st Century.*

Virtually everyone wants (hopes for? expects?) more in this arena from DOS. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates asserts that in order to harness the full power of the United States we must have "civilian institutions of diplomacy and development that are adequately staffed and properly funded."[33] He goes on to note that the relevant civilian agencies have been chronically undermanned and underfunded relative to the Department of Defense and would like to see the civilian agencies receive more resources so that all of the government, civilian and military, can better work together and jointly achieve better results.[34] The Department of Defense desperately wants the Department of State to be better at strategic communication and public diplomacy, and to show more leadership in this area. The 2010 QDDR indicates that the Department of State wants those things, too, and lays out ambitious plans to move DOS in that direction.

Department of Defense

The other major player in strategic communication is the Department of Defense. Let me say a few words comparing the two big players, DOS and DoD.

In general DoD is the larger department. The FY11 budget request for the Department of Defense is $708 billon.[15] The FY11 budget request for DOS (which also includes the budget for USAID) is $52.8 billion.[16] Obviously not all of DoD's budget is spent on strategic communication, but neither is that of DOS. Defense is at least an order of magnitude bigger than State is in virtually every respect.

Regarding public diplomacy and strategic communication specifically, DOS spends slightly more than $1 billion on, and has around 3,000 personnel who work on, public-diplomacy full-time. As reported in the *Washington Post*, "the size of military's efforts dwarf those of the diplomats."[17] It is difficult to put personnel figures or dollar amounts to DoD strategic-communication efforts, both because of definitional differences (if strategic communication is just a *process*, we really don't spend any money on it all), and because the organizations and structures with strategic-communication relevance are varied and spread widely throughout the DoD. The remainder of this section will describe different offices, organizations, commands, or formations in the U.S. military with a role in strategic communication.

Strategic Communication in the Pentagon

We will begin the enumeration inside the Pentagon, with organizations subordinate to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) or the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS).

There are three major players within OSD, the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD[P]), the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (OASD[PA]), and the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence (OUSD[I]).

From 2007 to 2009, OUSD(P) actually had a deputy assistant secretary of defense (DASD) for Defense Support to Public Diplomacy. In March 2009 USD(P) Michele Flournoy disestablished the DASD-level office, reassigning personnel from its regional desks out to the appropriate already existing regional policy shops and reorganizing to ensure high-level attention, advice, and coordination for strategic communication. With that in mind, in 2009 USD(P) appointed a senior advisor for global strategic engagement (Rosa Brooks) and established the OUSD(P) Global Strategic Engagement Team (GSET) to facilitate the strategic-communication process within Policy and for liaison with other Defense components.[18] As of late 2009, the GSET was busy reviewing the overall DoD approach to enterprise-wide

strategic coordination, existing strategic-communication-related capabilities and activities, recent DoD documents regarding strategic-communication concepts, and possible avenues for creating formal strategic-communication doctrine.[39]

A GSET representative cochairs the DoD-wide Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee (GESCC), a semiformal body that has, by all accounts, succeeded with a softer, voluntarily collaborative approach to coordination where the SCIG, its logical predecessor, failed. The GESCC was formed in 2009 out of the even less formal Information Coordinating Committee, a totally voluntary body of communication-minded defense professionals.

The GESCC is cochaired by representatives from OUSD(P) and OASD(PA), and brings together representatives from the four major Pentagon players, OUSD(P), OASD(PA), OUSD(I), and the Joint Staff. Membership and attendance are fairly open, so other DoD offices are frequently represented. These include other OSD offices (such as Legislative Affairs or Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics), the Combatant Commands, and interagency partners such as DOS, the NSC, and the National Counterterrorism Center.[40]

Also within OUSD(P) is the assistant secretary of defense for special operations/low intensity conflict and interdependent capabilities (ASD [SO/LIC&IC]). As part of a broader oversight role with regard to psychological operations/military information support operations (which are aggregated under special operations), ASD(SO/LIC&IC) coordinates and oversees implementation and development of policy specific to countering violent extremism and works in close concert with the GSET.[41]

The assistant secretary of defense for public affairs (ASD[PA]) serves as the advisor and principal staff assistant for all communication activities to the secretary of defense.[42] The assistant secretary of defense for public affairs is an important part of the OSD-level strategic-communication process.

Under ASD(PA) is the position of deputy assistant secretary of defense (joint communication) (DASD[JC]). Established in 2005, the Office of DASD(JC) has remained involved in strategic-communication coordination and planning both in the DoD and in the interagency. Major responsibilities of the office include ensuring consideration of communication and the communications environment in future planning, as well as coordination and synchronization of joint communication with interagency partners.[43] In late 2010 the Office of Joint Communication was renamed the Office of Communication Planning and Integration; it is not clear at this writing if that name change will be accompanied by any change in role or responsibilities. Public Affairs also includes the Joint Forces Command-based Joint Public Affairs Support Element, or JPASE, which was intended to have responsibility for

integrating strategic communication into war-fighter training.[44] In actual practice, pressure on the joint force from operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan led JPASE to take on much more of a direct support role than the intended training support function. As operations in Iraq and Afghanistan draw down, it will be interesting to see how the mission of the organization evolves, especially in light of plans to do away with U.S. Joint Forces Command, JPASE's current institutional home.

Finally, the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence (OUSD[I]) plays a role in OSD strategic communication. USD(I) is the principal advisor and assistant to the secretary of defense for information operations (IO).[45] Because of the role of IO in strategic communication, OUSD(I) stays aware and involved. As of this writing, there is an effort afoot to consolidate OUSD(I) information operations and strategic-communication-related personnel and responsibilities under OUSD(P) without otherwise damaging OUSD(I) equities. As this realignment takes place, OUSD(I) will have fewer equities and less involvement in strategic communication, so primary leadership for DoD strategic communication will be shared between OUSD(P) and ASD(PA).

Also in the Pentagon are the Joint Staff and their representatives to the strategic communication process. As noted in the 2009 DoD *Report on Strategic Communication:*

> The Joint Staff contributes to the strategic communication process at many levels. The J-3 (Current Operations) Directorate provides IO and PSYOP expertise and advice to DoD leadership to achieve national, strategic, and theater military objectives. The J-5 (Plans and Policy) Directorate, in conjunction with the Combatant Commands and Military Departments, develops policy guidance, plans, and strategic narratives for senior leadership, based upon policy guidance and directives from OSD.[46]

Further, the Joint Staff provides planning guidance with relevance to strategic communication to the Combatant Commands (COCOMs) and reviews the strategic-communication aspects of all COCOM operations and contingency planning documents.[47]

Strategic Communication in the Operating Forces

Outside the Pentagon and the immediate auspices of OSD and the Joint Staff, DoD still has a lot of structure that can be used for or coordinated as part of (depending again, on how you choose to define it) strategic communication. This major subsection will detail strategic-communication-relevant assets outside the Washington Beltway, primarily in the operating forces.

First is psychological operations (PSYOP), renamed military information support operations (MISO) by fiat in June 2010.[48] PSYOP/MISO units and soldiers traditionally perform five roles. The purpose of PSYOP/MISO is "information for effect," and doctrine lists five roles in which PSYOP/MISO forces can be employed:

- influence foreign populations
- advise the commander
- provide public information
- serve as the supported commander's voice
- counter enemy propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and opposing information[49]

Contemporary U.S. PSYOP/MISO forces consist of the following:

- one active Army Psychological Operations Group (POG), 4th POG out of Fort Bragg, NC (approximately 1,300 personnel)
- two Army Reserve POGs, 2nd and 7th POG (approximately 2,600 personnel)
- one Special Operations Wing (SOW), the 193rd SOW (six aircraft and aircrews)

In addition to the uniformed PSYOP/MISO forces of 4th POG there is a considerable cadre of civilian experts providing reachback capabilities to deployed forces as part of 4th POG's Strategic Studies Detachment (SSD).[50] These personnel have both influence expertise and country/cultural expertise on which PSYOP/MISO forces can draw.

The entire active duty component of MISO/PSYOP is dedicated exclusively to supporting U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The general purpose force is supported by the reserve component.

Small detachments of PSYOP/MISO personnel are detailed to U.S. embassies as Military Information Support Teams (MIST). These temporary postings provide embassies with needed influence resources (both personnel and funding), while giving PSYOP/MISO personnel real-world experience, practice, and training.

When strategic communication is discussed as a coordinating and integrating function, PSYOP/MISO messages and products are an important part of what needs to be coordinated and deconflicted.

In addition to being one of the primary sources of DoD influence messaging, PSYOP/MISO forces are the only trained influencers in the U.S. government. However, other than being the object of coordination, PSYOP/MISO organizations and forces play a very limited role in strategic communication. Defense strategic-communication coordinating and planning cells are often dominated by public affairs or information operations. PSYOP/MISO have allowed themselves to be marginalized in this arena, no doubt in part due to

As USMC Lieutenant C

> Many tactical comman
> (CMO). In CA, a school
> holding CA profession
> civil goals and then coo
>
> However, in the abs
> tactical commander can
> can liaison with locals t
> capability of the unit to

Thus the whole of the d
duct might be considered p
gic communication.

The operating forces als
moving imagery. The traditi
(COMCAM). The Army, N
formations.[50] The formation
when deployed, and are att
tions during operations. In
CAM troops are also armed
into harm's way and capture
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This allows them to docume
ically rigorous, or simply toc

COMCAM detachments
age or images in support of
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This allows personnel devel
images or footage without n
mation every time. Screene
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If you accept (as I do) th
as a source of signaling or c
must also be considered am
pabilities. As a 2010 article
soldier a rifleman' nor is it a
rized as: 'every soldier is a to

As I have argued elsewh
sailor, airman, and marine in
the information environme

their active-duty component being preoccupie
port of the "secret squirrels" at USSOCOM.

The next major DoD component outside t
strategic communication is information opera
chapter 2, IO suffer from definitional ambiguitie
IO, they really mean PSYOP/MISO.[51] Whateve
IO, there are actual information-operations pers
that we are referring to when we talk about IO

Information-operations personnel are staff
staffs at all levels of the defense hierarchy. Us
is under operations (3 in the traditional Na
ture and as used by U.S. military forces). This
Commands, where IO is usually designated J-3
information-operations officers, no enlisted pe
formations; there are only IO staff officers. As
smaller fraction of the force than PSYOP/MIS

Given the training IO officers receive in
information, they are ideally suited for many
tegic communication. Often operational mili
cells will be headed by, or will include repr
operations.

Public-affairs personnel also contribute to
tion. According to joint doctrine, the missio
port the [commander] by communicating tru
information about Department of Defense (D
national, international, and internal audienc
commander on media events and operations,
ment and dissemination of the commander's
nalists and media representatives by helpin
events and operations, and coordinates supp
arranging for embedded media positions). Pu
provide the commander with four capabiliti
media, enhanced morale and readiness, public
influence and deterrence.[53]

In practice, public affairs is about media rela
mander about the media impact of proposed
mander with public statements. PAOs prepare
from reporters, organize press conferences, and
with the media. When something goes wrong
(PR). Someone has to stand up at the press co
explanation, or announcement of intention t
then answer reporters' questions. Sometimes

will do this, in which cas
times senior PA personnel

Public affairs is also tra
however, does not report t
even the Chief of Staff; or
the PAO sits off to the side
mander as his or her advis

As a staff officer career
However, due to the growi
of communication and me
organizational structure.
Element (JPASE), a deplo
munication capability to v
monitoring is conducted
Wilson, assistant secretar
of PA activities and struc
channel, the Armed Forc
affairs officers and commu
divisions."[55]

While they don't genera
and the civil-military oper
communicate, and should,
tion. I am not alone in thi
ence, CMO are considered

CMO explicitly include
more related types of thing

- foreign humanitarian assist
- populace and resource cont
- nation assistance operation
- military civic action
- emergency services
- civil administration
- comestic support operation

Civil affairs is a structur
the conduct of CMO. The
ists; the Army has only on
by far the largest (by num
(PSYOP/MISO, IO, PA, C/

Further, CMO are not
considerable overlap. In sh
not all CMO must be done

to influence.[63] This influence is happenin
whether you plan for it or not, and whethe
to coordinate it. Further, the size of deplo
the formal communicators, PA, and PSYO

Presently, use of maneuver forces as p
solely at the discretion of commanders. Aft
Afghanistan and Iraq, many commanders g
their command to contribute positively or
missions. Given that few commanders ha
influence or communication, and the same
forces under their command, their efforts h

Strategic Communication at the Combatant Commands

The Combatant Commands (COCOMs
commands headed by a four-star flag or gen
batant Commanders have responsibility for
Responsibility (AOR), including strategic c
their staffs to attend to and plan for strategi
their discretion. If they have a related staff,
called is all up to them. For example, Pacific
munication Integration Working Group (
European Command (EUCOM) has a St
Group (SCWG—pronounced "squig"). A
word "communication" and instead calls th

The quality and composition of these
Rohm reports that "sometimes, these secti
tions or, worse, a cobbled-together bunch o
cers and noncommissioned officers untrain
These sections and their PA counterparts
advising commanders on the effects of acti
the commander's voice to foreign populati

In addition to their own strategic-cor
COMs also engage in Defense Support to
are DoD efforts to support DOS in their
usually initiated by a direct request from a
graphic COCOM.[65]

DSPD activities range from hospital-s
activities performed by military personne
formation Support Teams (MISTs) to emb
bassador, to DoD logistical or transportat
public-diplomacy activities. In all cases,

with the State Department, either at the country team level or at the Washington interagency level.[66]

COCOMs also plan and execute what are called Theater Security Cooperation activities with allies, partners, and neighbors in the international community in their area of responsibility. The emphasis of many of these activities is building partner capacity either for internal security in a given country or for contributions to international security (antipiracy, coalition peacepeacekeeping, etc.). An important secondary goal is the messages these activities communicate.

The final activity of note taking place at the Combatant Commands are the VOICE programs. Originally established in EUCOM, several of the COCOMs now have or have proposed VOICE programs. As named operations, they contain specific long-term communication and influence objectives, most aimed specifically at countering violent extremism. Another advantage to having named operations in this area is that it establishes a budget line and a recurring stream of resources (not just year to year) that in turn promotes continuity and stability with regard to thinking about and executing activities within the program.[67]

Broadcasting Board of Governors

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) was formed by statute in 1994 and became fully independent with its own appropriated funds in 1999, concurrent with the dissolution of USIA. At its formation in 1994, the BBG assumed responsibility for all nonmilitary, international broadcasting sponsored by the U.S government. Presently, this includes the Voice of America (VoA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), Radio and TV Martí, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN)—Radio Sawa and Alhurra Television.[68] BBG broadcasts and programs reach audiences in 60 languages totaling approximately 171 million people per week via radio, TV, the Internet and other new media.[69]

Perhaps oddly, BBG is an independent government agency, working in practice as more of a free and fair press than as an arm of the government. While funded by the government and with broad U.S. policy goals in mind, BBG is protected from coercion by other government agencies (part of the "board of governors" arrangement—"a nine-person bipartisan board that serves as a firewall against political interference in the journalistic product"[70]). Sometimes BBG broadcasts are critical of U.S. government policies, which, in their view, only enhances their credibility with international audiences (they aren't afraid to call a pot a pot) and increases dialogue.

The BBG in general is keen to contribute to strategic communication. As the GAO notes, "The BBG, as the overseer of U.S. international broadcasting

efforts, aims to support U.S. strategic communication objectives by broadcasting fair and accurate information, while maintaining its journalistic independence as a news organization."[71] Beyond serving to support long-term goals through maintaining credibility and disseminating true information, BBG might also support strategic communication by providing expertise or feedback regarding how certain policies might play in certain parts of the world.

U.S. Agency for International Development

The primary mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is to provide nonmilitary foreign assistance to countries around the world. USAID supports disaster recovery and promotes long-term and equitable economic growth by supporting efforts that support

- economic growth, agriculture and trade;
- global health; and
- democracy, conflict prevention, and humanitarian assistance.[72]

USAID has a network of communication specialists (just over 100 people), whose primary mission is to inform audiences in countries receiving aid about U.S. assistance.[73]

USAID's contribution to strategic communication is far greater than the weight of its 100 plus communication specialists. USAID is meant to be the primary doer of U.S. good deeds abroad. Since actions speak louder than words, both the assistance provided and how it is described and advertised are important parts of the strategic-communication context.

National Security Council

The National Security Council (NSC) is the president's forum for the consideration of foreign policy and national security by and with senior advisors and cabinet officials.[74] Traditionally, the NSC is not operational—that is, it doesn't conduct operations or activities, but is an advisory organization, a decision-making body, a place for discussion and coordination. This propensity to avoid the operational has in the past inhibited NSC involvement in strategic communication, where the lines between planning, coordinating, and doing are often blurred (after all, if strategic communication is a process, then the coordinating process *is* the operation, right?).

NSC involvement in strategic communication was not particularly successful under the Bush administration. In 2002 the NSC established a Strategic Communication Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC), which produced a never-released draft strategic communication strategy and was disbanded in

2003.[75] In 2006, NSC created a new PCC for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, but this was led by the undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs, and was always viewed as more a Department of State organization than an NSC activity. This PCC was disbanded with the change of administrations.

Obama's NSC has taken a more active, though still limited, role in strategic communication. NSC now includes a deputy national security advisor for strategic communications (DNSA/SC) and a senior director for global engagement (SDGE) as the principal deputy to the DNSA/SC. "Together, they are responsible for ensuring that (a) the message-value and communicative impact of actions are considered during decision-making by the National Security council and Homeland Security Council, (b) the mechanisms to promote strategic communication are in place within the National Security Staff (NSS), and (c) similar mechanisms are developed across the interagency. The DNSA/SC and SDGE are also responsible for guiding and coordinating interagency deliberate communication and engagement efforts, and execute this responsibility through the NSS Directorate for Global Engagement (NSS/GE) and through the Interagency Policy Committee (IPCs) on Strategic Communication, which they chair."[76]

In practice, in 2009 and 2010, the NSC has effectively engaged the interagency community for support for major events. When they are aware of a significant event, such as a new policy being announced or implemented, a new bilateral or multilateral agreement, a major military exercise with foreign partners, and so forth, they plan and coordinate broadly with the interagency. Given time to plan and coordinate, these NSC efforts have proven effective. Multiple agencies have been engaged, including some less traditional strategic-communication partners, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation or the Department of Treasury.

Partnership with various agencies has been effective, with input regarding possible challenges or concerns accepted and heeded. NSC has called attention to events/issues, encouraged planning relative to those events, and provided a forum for the sharing, comparing, and deconfliction of those plans. Though to my knowledge limited so far to major events and policy rollouts, this integration across the executive branch has been fairly effective and surely counts as a strategic communication success, if not yet full realization of the promise of strategic communication.

The Broader Interagency Community

So far, we've hit the major acknowledged players in strategic communication in the executive branch. What about the broader interagency community? Other agencies are potentially relevant for several reasons. First, they may

also be engaged in communication activities (along the lines of corporate communication, external), and these formal messaging activities could be included and synchronized as part of strategic communication. Second, even if they aren't messaging, they surely are doing something, and, as discussed repeatedly, actions and policies communicate. Third, DOS and DoD aren't the only agencies engaged in traditional public- diplomacy activities. For example, in 2007, at least 62 different government departments conducted international exchange and training programs.[77]

The 2007 National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication makes this explicit: "All segments of the USG have a role in public diplomacy and global communication."[78] Many agencies that might not be traditionally thought of as part of the strategic-communication network have been (and should be more) involved. These include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Commerce, and the Centers for Disease Control.[79]

Congress?

If the whole U.S. government should think about and be involved to some extent in strategic communication, what about Congress? What is its role? Certainly Congress is a stakeholder in public diplomacy and strategic communication. In addition to a number of bills before Congress with strategic-communication or public-diplomacy relevance at this writing, there is broader concern among congresspersons regarding the health and effectiveness of strategic communication, public diplomacy, and information operations.[80] Representatives Adam Smith (D-WA) and Mac Thornberry (R-TX) sponsored the creation of the Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Caucus in 2010 in order to raise awareness of and strengthen U.S. efforts in the area.[81]

But what about Congress *as a communicator*? Colonel Matthew Beevers rightly points out the polarized and politicized utterances by individual representatives and senators can strike discordant notes among otherwise harmonized and synchronized communications:[82] "The effects of the U.S. political system—the polarization it often brings and the by-product of contradictory messages it produces—challenge the government's ability to deploy a coherent U.S. strategic communication capability."

While it is clearly the case that representatives and senators do contribute to the global information environment, and, while part of the government, often present points of view that disagree with the stated government policies, this is an unavoidable part of our political system. Efforts to coordinate or regulate the utterances of representatives and senators as part of strategic communication would go too far (and probably be illegal or

unconstitutional). Instead, we simply must accept that contentiousness and disagreement are part of electoral politics and make the virtues (and occasional shortcomings) of such a system part of the broader narrative we're trying to present.

Other Actors in Civil Society?

Broader interpretations of public diplomacy want to include segments of civil society too. After all, if exchange programs are a traditional part of public diplomacy, aren't the exchange participants from the United States part of the process? Aren't the Americans that foreign-exchange participants meet and interact with part of the process? Why don't we include the public in public diplomacy?

I think this is one of the areas in which strategic communication and public diplomacy do and should mean different things. We cannot (and should not) seek to strategize, coordinate, or otherwise manage the content of the interactions between our citizens and the citizens of other countries. To the extent that shared understanding, relationships, and personal engagement are part of our broader global engagement strategy, then we should encourage and facilitate as much citizen diplomacy as possible without trying to manage it or control it beyond creating opportunities for it to take place.

Of course, the fact that we can't (and shouldn't) control citizen contributions to the information environment can lead to problems as well. August 2010 saw considerable public outcry over plans to build a mosque near the former site of the World Trade Center in New York (the twin towers destroyed on 9/11). Such actions run directly counter to the firm commitments expressed and narratives offered by two presidential administrations reinforcing American religious freedom and assuring the world that American military operations after 9/11 are *not* anti-Muslim in design or execution.[83] What happens when the government's narrative is undermined by its own citizens?

Professor Dennis Murphy suggests a supporting narrative:

> We can and must emphasize the positive aspects of democracy in action. Protesters on both sides are free to peacefully (albeit vociferously) express their opinion without fear of retribution. This is truly freedom in action (speech and assembly) and supports our narrative. We can point out that the debate rages over the community center's appropriateness (arguments on both sides here), not its inherent right to exist.[84]

What about organizations in civil society, such as the Peace Corps, or the many private organizations that run programs for international student exchanges? Again, this is part of public diplomacy, something that should be

encouraged, but not, I think, something we want to formalize or structure in any way relating to strategic communication.

Finally, what about journalists, press, and media? The media represent a significant part of the flow of information within and between nations. Should the media be part of strategic communication?

The press, after all, retains its traditional role as the Fourth Estate. This term has its origin in the growing importance of reporters in late 19th- and early 20th-century Britain, a role which led Thomas Carlyle to claim that reporters constituted a fourth branch of Parliament.[55] The notion of press as the Fourth Estate has continued relevance in the context of the contemporary United States, in that the press, although not a formal part of the government, continues to play an important role for democracy by reporting on the process and outcomes of the government.

Does this mean they should be part of strategic communication? Not really. The press role as the Fourth Estate is as the *watchdog* of the government, not as a participant. The press ensures that the public knows what its government is doing, especially the bad bits, and will not (and should not) willingly serve as the mouthpiece for government information.

However, while strategic communication shouldn't include the media, strategic-communication planning had better well take the media into account. Press relations are an important part of strategic communication (just not the only part!), and journalistic reporting of good deeds and desired messages is an important way to disseminate and reinforce information. The trick, then, is to form a partnership with the press such that both sides get what they want without compromising their principles or feeling used. A perfect example of this is the now institutionalized innovation of "embedded press." Embedded reporters live and travel with military units, under their protection, and with exclusive access to the operations and activities of that unit. The reporters get access to difficult-to-cover events and increase the safety of reporters while doing so.[56] The military meets its obligations regarding press access, avoid risks to operational security, builds credibility, and obtains good public relations.[57]

Relationships between Organizations Contributing to Strategic Communication

So, we've established that the two main players in U.S. government strategic communication are the Department of State and the Department of Defense, with the Department of Defense being the larger and more capable partner. We've also established that several other elements of the government have significant roles, including the National Security Council, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Further, there are a host of nontraditional public-diplomacy

or strategic-communication elements in the broader interagency community that should be considered for certain strategic-communication or public-diplomacy activities. Finally, while it would be inappropriate to try to manage the activities or the content produced by members of the broader public or groups in civil society, these actors are important contributors to public diplomacy, and should be enabled, encouraged, or partnered with as possible and appropriate. Deciding which groups in civil society to support or partner with might also be an appropriate task in the strategic-communication portfolio.

However, before the government concerns itself overmuch with the possible strategic-communication implications of partnering with various parties in civil society, first it needs to get things in order internally. Crawl, walk, run.

So far, this chapter has described many strategic-communication-relevant organizations and entities, and has offered some information about the relationships between them. This final section in the chapter, then, turns explicitly to these relationships, describing some of the tensions and challenges inherent in government-wide organizing for strategic communication and detailing some of the existing working relationships.

Given the confusion and debate about the lexicon and purpose of strategic communication, the frequent changes and uncertain lines of authority in the U.S. government's organizing for strategic communication should come as no surprise. At the time of this writing, the appropriate roles and relationships between different agencies, departments, and elements for the conduct and coordination of strategic communication are still subjects of debate.

One of the biggest relational issues is who should be in charge. The way most people would like to see things structured, the Department of State would be in charge. After all, State is the department with the career public-diplomacy force, inherited the bigger chunks of USIA, and was anointed with the lead in strategic communication under the Bush administration. State is the civilian agency and has global responsibilities in peacetime and in times of war.

However, this preference for leadership from DOS overlooks several key factors. First, State has not, in the past, really wanted the job. As noted above, State has generally only grudgingly accepted the public-diplomacy mission and doesn't really want anything to do with strategic communication. Second, State is the much smaller partner. As public-diplomacy scholar Matt Armstrong is fond of saying, "American public diplomacy wears combat boots."[88] By this he intends to point out that the Department of Defense can devote more personnel and resources to informing, influencing, and persuading foreign audiences, and, in the era of operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, military forces have generated the preponderance of messages and signaling actions that foreign audiences receive.

Not, of course, that DoD really wants the mission either. All the defense personnel to whom I've spoken about this would love to see DOS take a large role and employ more developed capabilities in this area. DoD's embrace of the inform, influence, and persuade mission set stems from necessity. The military recognizes that strategic communication is essential to mission success, and that if they don't do it, no one else will.

The Congress doesn't necessarily see it that way. Congress wants DOS to do public diplomacy, and DoD to not do public diplomacy.[90] The White House agrees:[91]

> We recognize the need to ensure an appropriate balance between civilian and military efforts. As a result, a process has been initiated to review existing programs and resources to identify current military programs that might be better executed by other Departments and Agencies.

In an ideal world, I would agree with them too. If State had a more robust public-diplomacy apparatus, then DoD could leave the majority of baseline and nonwartime (or noncontingency) inform, influence, and persuade efforts up to them, only needing to retain such capacity for times of crisis or war. Under such an arrangement, DOS would be the unambiguous lead, having significant ongoing activities and plans for all countries and regions, so that the military, when responding to a contingency, could both rely on and comfortably subordinate themselves to State's leadership. Hopefully the reforms proposed in the 2010 QDDR will be fully realized, and DOS will become the leader of robust civilian capabilities in this area that everyone wants, rendering this issue moot.

A great vision, but we aren't there yet. For now, tensions remain in decisions about allocating resources and tasks to different departments and agencies. We may all agree that in principle we want a certain set of tasks done by civilian agencies rather than the military. The problem arises when the civilian department or agency assigned to do the task won't or can't complete it. It isn't really fair to pull tasks from DoD and assign them to civilian agencies when the costs for failure to complete those tasks will be disproportionately borne by deployed soldiers and marines. The simple fact of the matter is, even if you'd rather the military not do some of these public-diplomacy tasks, if you do ask them to do them, they get done!

In late 2010 an interagency working group was examining how certain programs could be moved from DoD to DOS, how to allocate financial resources, how to quickly streamline or eliminate programs, and how to preserve important capacities and expedite strengthening civilian agency capabilities to support an optimal balance between civilian and military capabilities and roles in this area.[91]

At the operational level, DOS personnel and DoD personnel generally get along smoothly. In a noncontingency country (i.e., not Iraq or Afghanistan), the country team might include both DOS and DoD personnel, but the ambassador or chief of mission is unambiguously in charge. "Achieving strategic communication, including through synchronization of words and deeds, as well as the effective execution of deliberate communication and engagement, is the responsibility of the Chief of Mission."[92] Coordinating bodies, Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG), are also available at the COCOMs. The JIACGs lack any real authority (authority is balanced between the Combatant Commander and the ambassadors at the individual countries in the COCOM AOR) but do serve as useful planning resources and as effective liaison.[93]

In countries that are the object of major contingencies (such as Iraq and Afghanistan), coordination is more complicated. There, ideally strategic communication would span not only the major military contingent but the larger-than-average civilian agency contingent, as well as allies and coalition partners, and the host nation government as well. In such cases, unity of command is not always maintained, and several competing strategic-communication structures can result.

The ambiguities about the appropriate roles for the two big players, DOS and DoD, impact their internal organizations as well. In DOS at least it is clear who has responsibility for public diplomacy: personnel under the undersecretary for public diplomacy and public affairs. In DoD, on the other hand, responsibility for strategic communication is more spread out. At the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) level, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs clearly has a stake, but because of separate command relations between public affairs and information operations, the undersecretary of for policy also has an important stake and separate lines of authority. Though they have many potentially competing internal organizations, DoD has, at the OSD level, finally found the right mix of formal and informal structures for coordinating between internal stakeholders. At the level of the operating forces and at the Combatant Commands, however, relationships are still highly dependent on personalities and on the personal proclivities and priorities of individual commanders: how much they emphasize the informational element of national power, whether or not they like the term "strategic communication" and how they choose to organize their staff.

Under the Obama administration, the National Security Council has taken a greater role in strategic communication. As noted above, NSC staffs have established forums for coordination and deconfliction of communications surrounding major rollouts and events. These have been successful by all accounts. These efforts are interesting because they coordinate successfully without recourse to exerting authority: none of the various departments

or agencies participating in the deconfliction are coerced in any way, nor is any of their routine departmental authority usurped. NSC deconfliction meetings allow all participants to discuss the issues, share plans and listen to the plans of others, collectively develop talking points and themes, and then return to their native agency with complete freedom to do whatever they want. Coordination isn't compelled. Instead, everyone behaves like a responsible adult and if one agency finds that its plan is orthogonal to the plan of another agency, they collectively and voluntarily work on adjustments to both plans to increase complimentarily. This kind of synchronization takes time and energy and is no doubt part of why these coordinating bodies currently only emphasize major events.

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CHAPTER 5

Challenges Facing U.S. Strategic Communication

I can't compete with a head on a stick.
—Anonymous Information Operations Officer

Throughout the book so far I've hinted at challenges and difficulties facing U.S. efforts in the area of strategic communication. Heck, the failure to agree on the meaning of the terms or the goals to be pursued both constitute significant challenges. This chapter takes a more systematic look at challenges and difficulties in this area and asks, what makes this so hard? This chapter both expands upon and refines the list I developed for chapter 2 of *Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation* in 2007.[1]

The chapter is in two major sections. The first lays out general challenges to U.S. government efforts to inform, influence, and persuade. The second narrows the focus and discusses challenges specific to the U.S. military in this arena.

What Makes This So Hard? General Challenges

We begin with the general challenges. Beyond the completely obvious "influence is hard" challenge, there are a host of challenges the United States faces that another country or actor might not, or might face to a lesser extent. These are:

- anti-American sentiment and its challenge to U.S. policy and military operations
- low baseline credibility
- unconstrained adversaries
- strategic communication is a seam issue and lacks a supporting constituency
- lack of resources for informing, influencing, or persuading
- lack of clear strategy

- news and news media issues
- measures of effectiveness (MOE)—how do you know what you are doing is working?
- context: global media, local information environments, and culture
- new media

Each is discussed in turn in what follows.

Anti-American Sentiment and Its Challenge to U.S. Policy and Military Operations

Anti-American sentiment is alive and well in many places around the globe. While ensuring that citizens of other nations are fond of the United States is not a policy goal in and of itself, unfavorable baseline attitudes held by the international community decrease the likelihood of support for or tolerance of U.S. operations and policies. At its most extreme, hostility toward the United States in foreign countries helps violent extremists there gain recruits and support. At lesser levels of animosity, anti-Americanism impedes U.S. efforts to promote political and social reforms and commercial and cultural relationships worldwide.[2]

Public-opinion polls suggest that much of the anti-Americanism observed in the world today is attributable to U.S. policies rather than to American culture, values, or people.[3] U.S. policies prove unattractive to international audiences for a variety of reasons. Some policies are relics of the Cold War and use paradigms that fall flat in the contemporary operating environment. These could include the acceptance of authoritarian regimes for Cold War motives or a model of information dissemination aimed at "huddled masses yearning to be free" that may not accurately characterize the populations in the contemporary operating environment.[4] Other policies encourage social or political reforms, such as universal suffrage, representative government, and freedom of religion. Although such social engineering may correspond with deeply held American values, it may not hold the same appeal to populations in certain areas, making for unattractive and unpersuasive themes and messages.

Other policies lack attractiveness because they are inadequately explained or understood. U.S. policy must be clearly articulated. This does not always happen. Policy explanations can ring hollow in situations in which the motivation offered publicly differs from the true, private motivation, or when the offered explanation is not compelling. In an example of the latter case, many international audiences, including those in Iraq, misperceived the U.S. rationale for the invasion of Iraq as a war for oil.

If existing U.S. policies are hated, new U.S. policies are likely to be met with suspicion and may already have at least two strikes against them; this would include U.S. military intervention overseas. Popular resentment and distrust pose immediate communication hurdles to expeditionary U.S. forces.

The association of messages and messengers with the United States poses at least three additional challenges to effective messaging:

- *U.S. involvement "taints" messages.* Some strategic-communication themes have better chances of success if broadcast by an apparently neutral third party. Many existing U.S. influence efforts distance the United States at least one step from the message. For example, the United States does not actively disclose U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) funding for dozens of Afghan radio stations. USAID explains, "We want to maintain the perception (if not the reality) that these radio stations are in fact fully independent."[5]
- *Past and present actions damage U.S. credibility.* U.S. credibility is damaged when the United States fails to do what it says it will do and when actions contradict stated intentions. For example, in 2005 Pentagon news releases asserted that U.S. forces were "conducting operations side by side with our Iraqi brethren." This was not the case in all areas of operation (AOs) and indigenous civilians aware of this discrepancy likely lost some trust for subsequent U.S. force pronouncements.[6]
- *Contradictory messages increase confusion.* U.S. credibility is impaired when two different speakers give different accounts or explanations of the same thing or when the same speaker explains something differently to two different audiences. After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, DoS talking points highlighted different rationales for the invasion. To a U.S. audience, they would assert, "We're fighting them there so we do not have to fight them here," with the secondary implication that the United States intends to make the world a safer place. This emphasis was reversed for foreign audiences. Unfortunately, a globalized media made separate messages impossible.[7]

Low Baseline Credibility

Strongly related to anti-American sentiment is the low baseline credibility the U.S. government and her representatives enjoy worldwide. Professor Steve Corman suggested in 2006 that "the perceived credibility of the United States government on the global stage has never been lower."[8] Dr. Emily Goldman points out that the United States enjoyed very high credibility relative to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, where we were "liberators" and the Soviets were "oppressors"; now, however, in the Middle East, the United States is the oppressor and the occupier, making any messages that indicate otherwise suspect.[9] Since credibility is virtually prerequisite to any effort to influence, this is a significant challenge.

Unconstrained Adversaries

The United States is not alone in the information environment. Today's asymmetric adversaries use a variety of approaches to influence the attitudes

and behaviors of noncombatants and opinions of foreign observers. Adversary kinetic action, along with associated media attention, contributes to a wide range of adversary goals.

Many terrorist organizations recognize influence as a primary operational objective, and they integrate operations with related media requirements as a matter of course. Such integration is a fairly recent development. Hezbollah innovatively subjected "virtually all its military action to its propaganda and mass media requirements."[10]

Most concerning is the fact that our adversaries operate almost completely free of constraint in the information environment, and we do not.[11] In order to adhere to our values, societal norms, and laws (and to maximize long-term effectiveness), we as a nation choose to constrain our messaging and signaling activities. Adversaries completely eschew many of these constraints.

Adversaries employ a wide range of general approaches in their strategic communication, including the following:

Intimidating or coercing noncombatants: Threats, intimidation, and coercion are readily available tools to shape noncombatants' behavior. While they are unlikely to encourage favorable attitudes, such approaches can effectively prevent unfavorable attitudes from being turned into actions (consider insurgent efforts in Afghanistan to assassinate collaborators). Physical threats and intimidation discourage locals from defecting in favor of even a well-meaning outsider.

Intimidating journalists and controlling their access: By controlling which journalists are allowed into an area and by influencing what they are allowed to witness (or influencing what they safely feel they can report on), an adversary shapes the content of the news.

Filming and distributing records of operations: Many insurgent or terrorist groups have adopted this tactic. Regarding Hezbollah, Ron Schliefer observes,

> Stills, video, and film became so central to the organization's military activities that it might reasonably be claimed that they dictated both its overall strategy and daily operations. Indeed, the organization's motto could be summed up in the words: "If you haven't captured it on film you haven't fought."[12]

Forging special or exclusive relationships with certain media: Adversaries often tip off reporters from sympathetic media outlets about operations, which allows them to record the events, scoop other news agencies, and report operations in a manner favorable to the insurgents.

Engaging in disinformation: Adversaries sometimes fabricate events or, more effectively, lay down a fabrication atop a base of fact. Today's operating environment facilitates disinformation. Irregular adversaries worldwide often

eschew uniforms, so after any engagement, there are casualties in civilian clothes.

Providing basic services: Doing good works is a classic approach to winning friends and influencing people. Both insurgent and terrorist networks have adopted this strategy.[13]

Supporting youth and childhood education: Adversaries also integrate influence messages into school curricula. Some messages are in textbooks and other materials disseminated by those who are not considered U.S. adversaries. Consider the middle school textbook from Saudi Arabia that teaches that "Jews and Christians were cursed by Allah, who turned them into apes and pigs."[14] Other influence messages are passed on in educational settings in which adversaries have more direct control, such as the madrassas of the Taliban.

Making cultural, religious, or national appeals: Adversaries also draw on approaches that are unique to their culture, region, religion, or nation. These are particularly challenging to U.S. influence efforts, as there is little opportunity to reply in kind.

Adversaries employ such approaches through a variety of media platforms. This diversity makes countering adversary influence difficult for the United States and her allies. Each of these media platforms holds its own challenges for U.S. strategic communication:

Internet: Internet posting is inexpensive, easy, and relatively safe for an adversary. Further, the technology has reached a critical mass in accessibility, with high-speed Internet access available worldwide, if not at home, then in many communities through Internet cafes or other publicly available resources. Thus, influence messages and materials are easy for the adversary to get onto the Web, where their target audiences have relatively easy access to those materials.

Adversary-owned television stations: Adversary groups have set up their own television stations, either locally broadcast or satellite. The station run by Hezbollah in Lebanon is the longest-running example.[15]

Pulpits and fatwas: Many adversary groups, especially Islamist groups, make extensive use of religious media platforms. Sermons and fatwas justify terror attacks, call people to arms against infidels, and encourage demonstrations against policies or perceived slights.

CDs and DVDs: Adversary groups distribute shaping messages via CDs or DVDs, providing them to the news media. The use of portable disk media allows messages to be distributed in areas otherwise isolated from traditional media such as radio or TV. CD or DVD sales allow adversaries to recoup some of their costs.

Word of mouth: Adversaries spread shaping messages via rumor, word of mouth, and the grapevine. A 2006 international study found that people

indicated that they got their most reliable information from acquaintances or others "just like them."[16] Adversaries take advantage of this phenomenon.

Strategic Communication Is a Seam Issue and Lacks a Supporting Constituency

Since the demise of the USIA, there has been no U.S. government entity whose sole mission is something like strategic communication. As noted in the previous chapter there are quite a few agencies and departments who have some responsibility for strategic communication or could play a role in it through their actions or messages, but all of them have some other primary mission, leaving strategic communication second or third (or worse) and shared with other stakeholding organizations (for whom it is also second or third or worse).

Worse than being a single organization's secondary focus, it is a secondary or tertiary focus of several organizations. This makes strategic communication a "seam issue." In a bureaucracy like the U.S. government, seams are areas in which an organization will jealously defend its prerogatives, but in which more difficult, more expensive, or otherwise unattractive tasks may be left to the partner who shares the seam. Since managing the strategic communication seams is no one's top priority, integration and coordination suffer.[17]

Finally, in part because it is no single organization's raison d'être, strategic communication and public diplomacy lack a constituency.[18] There is no organization that is pushing hard for further responsibilities and resources in this area, and there is no large public block or significant congressional delegation pushing to ensure improvement. Perhaps the new Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Caucus will help energize just such a constituency in Congress, but I'm not holding my breath.

Lack of Resources for Informing, Influencing, or Persuading

One of the most frequently noted complaints in the various reports and proposals for the improvement or remediation of strategic communication or public diplomacy is the lack of resources.[19] Here are some of the most critical shortfall areas:

Personnel: The Department of State Public Diplomacy apparatus includes less than 3,500 full-time personnel. "Civilian agencies have not been staffed or resourced for extraordinary missions."[20]

The force structure of the three main DoD communication entities—PA, PSYOP/MISO, and IO—is much too limited relative to the work required. PSYOP/MISO, for example, has only one active-component PSYOP group—the 4th PSYOP Group, out of Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, totaling around 1,300 personnel—and two reserve-component psychological operations groups (2nd

Psychological Operations Group and 7th Psychological Operations Group, comprising another 2,600 personnel). The PA force structure is even thinner.

Training and preparation: As noted earlier, PSYOP/MISO personnel are the only trained influencers in the U.S. government. Their training is often viewed as inadequate within their own community.[21] Department of State personnel receive even less training. The lack of backfill (available personnel to man desks while other personnel train) at Department of State severely constrains their ability to further train their workforce.

Money for programs: Air time, printing, and local contracts for engagement activities are not free. Traditional public-diplomacy programs suffer because of underfunding, and a lot of good ideas never reach execution because their relatively small price tags can't be met.

Translators: Translators and interpreters are an underresourced capability throughout the government and military. On the defense side, inform, influence, and persuade initiatives often require better translators or interpreters than do other operations. Much of face-to-face communication is nonverbal. Able translators are critical to fully understanding the moods, attitudes, and impressions of those present during face-to-face encounters, in addition to determining the meaning of spoken words.

Lack of Clear Strategy

U.S. strategic communication suffers from a lack of strategy.[22] Critics contend that U.S. strategy in general is adrift and meandering,[23] and that this is even worse with regard to public diplomacy and strategic communication.[24] The title of a 2005 GAO report sums up the concern: *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of National Communication Strategy*.[25] If strategic communication is about connected and nesting messages and signals from top to bottom, there needs to be an overarching strategy at the top for everything subordinate to connect to. "The USG has no [strategic communication] strategy to serve as the foundation for integration of all USG efforts to effectively communicate its policies to the world."[26]

What guidance exists is considered too vague. Even classified strategy documents from the NSC are reported as too ambiguous to be truly useful.[27] An observer opines in the *Atlantic* that the administration "believes that the President's speeches and outreach are sufficient basis for an offensive information campaign" and doesn't feel a need to provide much strategic guidance beyond that.[28]

News and News Media Issues

Long-time media scholar Michael Schudson notes with regard to the U.S. press that "a comparison of any leading metropolitan paper of 1995 with one

of 1895 demonstrates instantly that today's news is shaped much more by a professional ethic and reflects fewer partisan hopes or fears than a truly political press."[29]

There are at least seven emerging trends that color today's news and complicate U.S. strategic-communication efforts when they involve or rely on the news media:

- *Emergence of the 24-hour news cycle:* Historically, news was deadline-driven and had a daily news cycle. It appeared in daily papers or was presented on the evening news. However, with the dawn of continuous 24-hour cable and satellite news networks and continuous live-feed Internet news, the concept of news cycles has changed. Adversaries can time actions to result in leading stories on U.S. television during daytime or evening news hours.[30] The continuous and live nature of television news puts pressure on journalists to report stories first and to fill the news void with content, sometimes to the advantage of U.S. adversaries.
- *Importance of framing:* How a story is structured and the attitude presented regarding an event constitutes the frame of the story. Frames are the perspective of the story.[31] News simplifies the complex, exemplified by the ever-prominent role of sound bites. Choices about images also contribute to frames. A demonstration involving dozens of protestors seems more poignant with a close shot of a small group of protesters and the outrage clear on their faces. That same protest is visually dismissed with a long-range shot showing the small gathering of protesters contrasted with the large and empty town square behind them.
- *Bias:* Accusations of bias are increasingly leveled against non-Western media and Arabic media in particular. The American domestic press has become more polarized as it is forced to compete for market share with nontraditional media. Government personnel often experience press as biased because of the role of the press as the Fourth Estate (discussed in the previous chapter), which supports the role of the press as the public's watchdog over the government.[32] When the press is much more critical of the government and the military than of terrorists or insurgents, this is bias, but it is also part of the nature of relations between the press and the government.
- *Too few reporters:* Financial pressures force many news outlets to make do with fewer reporters than in the past. Having too few reporters on the scene is tantamount to having an insufficient number of credible witnesses, which creates an environment rich for adversary disinformation.
- *Control of journalists' access:* With reporter safety a very real concern, insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan control journalistic access in parts of the country where they have influence. Lack of access impacts the depth of reporting.
- *Propensity for errors and weak retractions:* The 24-hour news cycle pressures journalists to get their stories out first. This pressure dramatically compresses the time available for fact checking and frequently results in erroneous stories. Active adversary efforts to disseminate disinformation compound this problem. At the same time, news organizations fail to give retractions comparable space or prominence to the original erroneous story.

- *If it bleeds, it leads*: While actions speak louder than words, certain actions speak louder than others. As Tony Corn quips, "If good deeds spoke for themselves, we could send the Peace Corps and disband the Marine Corps."[33] Modern news is predominantly detached and negative, and favors the sensational and the violent. The old aphorism "if it bleeds, it leads" remains true. "It should come as no great shock, then, that 'good news' stories about military operations do not appear with regularity in mainstream print and broadcast journalism."[34]

Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)—How Do You Know What You Are Doing Is Working?

Measures of effectiveness for influence are particularly challenging. The biggest problem is connecting a series of messages or signals with some measurable quantity or quality that is not confounded by other possible causes. For example, many Iraqi soldiers surrendered at the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Was this due to the PSYOP leaflets dropped instructing them to do so? Was it instead due to the impact of the coalition's massive military might? Were there other causes? What was the most likely combination of causes that resulted in the desirable end? In this case, the possible causes are highly conflated, even though the objective being measured—surrender—is an observable behavior. It would be even more difficult to assess the multiple possible causes underlying other objectives, such as creating positive public attitudes toward the coalition.

Even where measurement is possible, challenges remain. Existing techniques from the social sciences and from industry are often difficult to get right and can be expensive to implement. Additionally, many are subject to various forms of bias—including response bias (i.e., when the respondent tells you what you want to hear), selection bias (i.e., when the sample is not chosen in a representative fashion), and self-selection bias (i.e., when only people who want to participate in a poll do so, and the responses of these individuals differ substantially from the hypothetical responses of those who did not participate). Finally, what you can measure may not be what you want to measure. It might be possible to get an approximation of changes in beliefs with longitudinal public-opinion polls, but those may not connect to propensity to act as cleanly as you might hope. As Edward R. Murrow noted, there is "no needle that moves or computer that clicks" when a mind is changed.[35]

Context: Global Media, Local Information Environments, and Culture

Efforts to inform, influence, and persuade all occur in the context of global media, the local information environment, and culture. These contextual issues influence the execution and success of shaping.

With globalized media, every message has the potential to be seen anywhere. Even locally targeted messages—a single flyer or poster stuck to a wall—can be transposed to another medium (e.g., a camera phone) and retransmitted anywhere. It is consequently impossible to qualify a message's audience with the word "only" (for example, "only Americans" or "only Baghdad residents").

This affects U.S. government strategic communication in two significant ways. First, messages designed for one audience may be received by entirely unintended audiences. For example, presidential rhetoric during the George W. Bush administration for the domestic audience regarding the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) included phrases such as "crusade against evil," which increased perceptions in the Arab world that the United States intended a war against Islam.[16] Second, it is impossible to prevent information spread abroad from returning for domestic consumption. This is good reason to avoid conducting propaganda in the negative sense, as you don't want to be in the position of misleading or manipulating your own citizens.

The local information environment is another relevant part of the context. Here, I use the term "information environment" to denote the scheme of media and modes of information exchange within a region or area. What media are in use in an area? How are they used? Which population groups use predominantly which media? Knowing the answers to these sorts of questions is just the beginning of understanding the information environment in a given area.

Information environments vary; there is variation at the regional level (tabloids appear in Europe, but not so much in Africa), at the national level (Americans watch CNN or Fox News; Saudis watch Al Jazeera), and within different parts of a country (Los Angeles has 20 FM radio stations; Pittsburgh has 15). There is variation in the information habits among groups at any of those levels. For example, college students in Los Angeles may listen predominantly to two or three FM radio stations while area business district commuters choose others. Area sports enthusiasts may prefer AM to FM radio. There may be regional differences in how those media are displayed and what they are used for, even where a particular medium is fairly ubiquitous (newspapers, posters, or flyers). Europe, for example, more so than the United States, tends to have kiosks on which to post flyers and notices.

The information environment in an area is a crucial part of the context for messages and signals to be put into that environment. Effective influence of a desired audience occurs only through media used by that target audience. Understanding a given information environment and casting messages in forms that are appropriate to that environment pose significant challenges.

Culture constitutes another piece of the context in which shaping takes place. We use "culture" as a shorthand way of referring to a group or people's

"way of life" or "way of doing things" that can vary across contexts or locales and can cause confusion, misunderstanding, or other "losses in translation" when different cultural assumptions come into contact.

Words cause similar cultural confusion. Some serve as cultural shorthand for value-laden concepts that seem clear in translation but lose something essential. "Freedom" and "democracy" are two examples of English words that imply more than they denote in certain cultural contexts, and perhaps less in others.

> Thus when American public diplomacy talks about bringing democracy to Islamic societies, this is seen as no more than self-serving hypocrisy. Moreover, saying that "freedom is the future of the Middle East" is seen as patronizing, suggesting that Arabs are like the enslaved peoples of the old Communist World—but Muslims do not feel this way: they feel oppressed, but not enslaved.[17]

"Jihad" is another example of a word with greater depth of meaning to its native users than to those across the cultural divide.

> Bin Laden has also insidiously convinced us to use terminology that lends legitimacy to his activities. He has hijacked the term "jihad" to such an extent that U.S. and other Western officials regularly use the terms "jihadist" and "terrorist" interchangeably. In doing so, they unwittingly transfer the religious legitimacy inherent in the concept of jihad to murderous acts that are anything but holy.[18]

Strategic communication across linguistic and cultural divides faces the challenges of translation and cultural understanding of certain concepts. Themes and messages need to be contextually sensitive, and culture can be a minefield. Reports from marines operating in Afghanistan confirm this concern:

> As Marines wage war against an entrenched insurgency in one of the world's most difficult physical environments, they have found that their greatest challenge may be learning to operate among a vastly different human terrain, among people with deeply seated traditions and a set of values much different from their own.[19]

Now Media

Making it even harder to match culture to context and message in appropriate media is the fact that the global media environment and many local media environments are particularly fluid in the contemporary era.

The reason for this fluidity? Technological change and the adoption of new technology, as well as the fad-technology lifecycle. In many environments, traditional media are giving way to so-called new media. Of course, since what was new media isn't new anymore, the better term might be "now media."

While very little about the development, adoption, and spread of now media is predictable, it is almost all digital and almost all incredibly rapid. Keeping up with these changes and adapting traditional messaging organizations to new realities is rough. "We know that exponential growth in mobile phone, social media, and viral communication is changing diplomacy and armed conflict. But we are struggling with what this means for our institutions and smart power instruments."[40]

Now media have several implications for government communication. First, information is now collected and shared at the lowest possible levels, so state monopolies over information and the power associated with its control are gone forever.[41] Second, predicting what information will go global and/or viral and find massive audiences (and through what medium or media it will do so) is becoming increasingly impossible. Third, catching up with incorrect or misleading information is increasingly difficult. Corrections and retractions receive minimal attention, and once information is out there it is increasingly difficult to refute it or even explain it.[42]

What Makes This So Hard? Challenges Specific to the Department of Defense

Having laid out a selection of general challenges that impact U.S. government strategic-communication efforts regardless of who in the government is undertaking them, the discussion now turns to challenges specific to the Department of Defense. These include:

- the traditional kinetic focus of military operations
- "sprinkleism"
- information fratricide at all levels
- the reputation of PSYOP and IO
- legal constraints
- matching message, medium, and audience
- mistakes and errors
- fallout and second-order consequences of expedient choices
- command use of communication assets
- balancing short-, medium-, and long-term goals
- lack of doctrine
- competing parochial interests

Each is discussed below.

The Traditional Kinetic Focus of Military Operations

U.S. forces may win every combat engagement but still fail to garner the support of the noncombatant population. A focus on kinetic operations to the exclusion of efforts to inform, influence, and persuade increases the likelihood of this kind of outcome.

U.S. military doctrine and training has traditionally emphasized actions against an adversary and force projection.[43] "Senior and mid-level military leaders have evolved in a culture that emphasizes kinetic warfighting skills, both in planning and execution."[44] Operations in which the operational focus is on noncombatants and with methods of engagement that do not involve "putting steel on a target" are a step—often, a lengthy a step—away from tradition.

At the tactical and operational levels of war, U.S. forces have been trained to fight, not influence. British brigadier Nigel Aylwin-Foster, in a seminal *Military Review* article, contends that an overemphasis on killing and capturing insurgents, combined with liberalized rules of engagement (ROE) and an overemphasis on force protection, resulted in unacceptably high numbers of civilian casualties in early operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. These casualties angered the population. Combined with cultures that require the vengeful righting of perceived wrongs, such casualties have, in part, swelled insurgent ranks and their well of support.[45]

Even when commanders realize that influence is essential to mission success and try to do a better job at it, they often don't have the training necessary to do so. Some commanders have a great intuitive understanding of the essence of effective communication; others, sadly, do not.

The fact that actions communicate only compounds this challenge. If a picture can be worth a thousand words, then a bomb can be worth ten thousand. One errant bomb or picture exposing a grievous error in judgment (like the Abu Ghraib detainee abuse photos) can undermine months of message-based influence efforts.

"Sprinkleism"

One of the unfortunate consequences of the traditional military emphasis on kinetics is that strategic communication is often an afterthought. When that happens, the result is what Anthony Pratkanis calls "the *sprinkles* approach," where the contributions of the communication professionals are added at the last minute, usually with little effect.[46] When this happens, commanders or operations officers will direct IO staffs to "sprinkle some of that IO stuff" on an already completed military plan.[47] Edward R. Murrow ("the takeoffs, not just the crash landings") would not approve.[48]

Information Fratricide at All Levels

Several barriers confront coordination and deconfliction within DoD, between DoD and the rest of the U.S. government, and between DoD and U.S. coalition partners. According to Army Field Manual 3–13, "*Information fratricide* is the result of employing information operations elements in a way that causes effects in the information environment that impede the conduct of friendly operations or adversely affect friendly forces."[49] All too often, "information fratricide" results in credibility loss, contrary messaging, or other limitations to effective strategic communication.

Analysis of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan through 2006 reveals that information fratricide has manifested in at least three areas:

- lack of coordination or synchronization of strategic communication between DoD and other U.S. government agencies
- lack of coordination or synchronization with coalition partners
- lack of coordination between military inform and influence personnel[50]

Lack of Coordination or Synchronization of Strategic Communication Between DoD and other U.S. Government Agencies. To avoid information fratricide at the highest levels, information activities must be coordinated across the government. This is one of the things that strategic communication encompasses. This is often not accomplished for several reasons. First, even if we consider only the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and DoD, Combatant Commands' (COCOMs') geographical boundaries do not directly correspond with DOS regions. This poses a coordination obstacle between DoD and DOS that becomes compounded when other U.S. government entities, such as USAID and the Department of Justice, are also participants.

Lack of Coordination or Synchronization with Coalition Partners. In addition to difficulties coordinating with the rest of the U.S. government, DoD faces the challenge of coordinating shaping efforts with U.S. coalition partners. This problem spans the spectrum, from strategic to tactical. A classic example pertains to variation in Rules of Engagement (the conditions under which troops may fire weapons) across multinational boundaries in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other problems resulting from failure to coordinate with coalition partners include problems similar to those discussed previously: possible conflicting messages, say-do gaps, and loss of credibility.

Lack of Coordination between Military Inform and Influence Personnel. Coordinating shaping efforts within DoD is also a challenge. Several functional areas have inform-and-influence responsibilities and capabilities: PA, IO, PSYOP/MISO, defense support to public diplomacy (DSPD), and civil-military operations (CMO), just to start. Then there is also the influence inherent in the other operations of all other U.S. force elements.

There are lots of moving parts and these elements do not always coordinate, either because they are busy doing their own thing or because of organizational resentment. This includes a reticence on the part of Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) to coordinate with other functions, particularly PSYOP/MISO.

This hesitancy stems from several sources. First, the traditional PA culture holds that PA missions are to "inform, not influence" and to communicate PA messages on behalf of the commander.[51] Current joint doctrine, while requiring PA and IO coordination, prohibits PAOs from "planning or executing" PSYOP:

> PA capabilities are related to IO, but PA is not an IO discipline or PSYOP tool. PA activities contribute to IO by providing truthful, accurate and timely information, using approved DOD PAG [public affairs guidance] to keep the public informed about the military's missions and operations, countering adversary propaganda, deterring adversary actions, and maintain trust and confidence of the US population, and our friends and allies. PA activities affect, and are affected by, PSYOP, and are planned and executed in coordination with PSYOP planning and operations. PA must be aware of the practice of PSYOP, but should have no role in planning or executing these operations.[52]

Second, many PAOs are cautious in establishing closer relationships because they misunderstand MISO/PSYOP. Many PAOs are under the impression that most of what PSYOP does is based on falsehood, so-called black PSYOP, and that PSYOP is exclusively tactical. In fact, the vast majority of PSYOP activities include no falsehood or misattribution whatsoever.

The Reputation of PSYOP and IO

Currently, most DoD influence activities are under the auspices of PSYOP/MISO and IO. The very terms "psychological operations" and "information operations" have a negative connotation, due, in part, to Vietnam-era activities, that smacks of propaganda, deception, and illicit human influence in ways that are contrary to American values. IO officer Jayson Spade explained, "PSYOP has negative connotations. The problem? It seems to be the notion that we are trying to influence people."[53] This is not a new problem:

> [Certain actions by] the U.S. mission in Iraq have re-ignited fears about government acting to replace independent reporting with wartime propaganda. The same fears have been expressed during past wars as the U.S. government sought to promote a positive view of the nation and its policies.[54]

While it is unclear if this reputation extends to allies or citizens in the countries in which we operate, it clearly extends broadly throughout the U.S. military. This is certainly an important part of the motivation for the change of PSYOP to MISO as discussed in chapter 2. Time will tell whether the name change and associated changes to doctrine will be sufficient to change this reputation. I suspect that if it ends up being just a name change, it will not.[55]

Legal Constraints

Strategic communication and public diplomacy are not excused from adhering to the law. Some applicable laws create significant barriers to the military executing strategic communication. Three areas are particularly challenging:

Copyright law: When U.S. forces establish television or radio stations in another country, they are bound by U.S. copyright law as they seek to fill their broadcast time. For example, a U.S.-run TV station in a foreign country in which U.S. forces are operating that seeks to broadcast attractive entertainment programs interspersed with commercials that are actually U.S. military public service announcements or other engagement messages is obligated to seek (and pay for) licenses for all of the entertainment programs.

Prohibitions on targeting U.S. citizens: Public Law 402, the U.S. Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 (the Smith-Mundt Act), has been interpreted as prohibiting DoD from targeting influence activities at U.S. audiences. While PSYOP/MISO would never intentionally target domestic audiences, with the reach of the Internet and 24-hour news, however, many of the Pentagon's information efforts can wind up in the U.S. media.[56] Thus a misinterpretation of an antiquated element of a more than 60-year-old law can interfere with effective DoD use of the Internet. The Smith-Mundt Act is out of date and is criticized for a number of other reasons, all of which have contributed to a proposal in Congress to reform the Act.[57]

PSYOP approval process: Less a legal barrier than a procedural one, this involves product development and approval. A rigorous process makes sense. However, product approval needs should be balanced with timeliness. Finding a process that leads to the right balance is the challenge. As Christopher Lamb notes,

> A dilatory PSYOP product approval process is detrimental to the execution of an effective PSYOP campaign. Before operations begin, a delayed process inhibits PSYOP planning and rehearsal time, while slow approval during an actual campaign can render some military and political products useless, since they may be overcome by events.[58]

Matching Message, Medium, and Audience

Every member of a given population is different—and different in ways that can affect perceptions of a message. Messages that treat everyone in a large population as a homogenous target audience risk missing the mark or, in the extreme, prove deleterious to influence objectives. Identifying the appropriate levels of aggregation within a population can be very difficult.

Another challenge is anticipating how messages will impact the target and other groups that are part of the inadvertent audience. As suggested previously, culture, language, and other features of the receiving audience (whether targeted or not) impact how messages are perceived.

Finally, identifying the appropriate media to use to convey a message to a given target audience requires care. Different locales have different information environments and different cultural preferences for the form and style of the media they consume. For example, residents of Kabul, Afghanistan, likely vary considerably from their rural counterparts in terms of media consumption habits. Similarly, radio is particularly popular in parts of South Asia, especially for women who have tight restrictions on traveling outside of the home.

Mistakes and Errors

Strategic communication is much less challenging when everything goes as planned. Unfortunately, sometimes U.S. personnel make mistakes or judgment errors, or ordnance goes astray and hits an unintended target. Mistakes can send signals in direct contradiction of other signals and messages, and adversely impact influence efforts.

In such situations, DoD's responses have habitually been poor. Ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have included several situations in which U.S. forces or coalition partners have made some kind of substantial error with potentially negative influence consequences. Dealing with these and similar unfortunate actions remains a challenge to effective strategic communication.

Fallout and Second-Order Consequences of Expedient Choices

Implicit in the recognition that every action has information consequences is the challenge of thinking through the possible consequences. Expedient choices often have negative influence consequences. Sometimes, these are obvious: using threat of force to disperse a crowd will not make members of that crowd any more well disposed toward U.S. forces. More subtly, failure to disperse the crowd may embolden it to further action, thereby leaving an impression of U.S. inability to control the situation.

This is a situation that is often generically called "the dilemma of force." Using force can injure the very noncombatants U.S. forces want to protect (and influence), but failure to use force in some circumstances may allow adversary forces to escape or prevail, leading to lack of belief in friendly force capabilities to overcome the foe. Threat of force results in the same kinds of credibility issues faced by other efforts to inform, influence, and persuade. If threat of force is no longer credible, a valuable information tool is lost.

Sometimes, the consequences of expedient choices are less obvious: choosing to work with a specific tribe may appear as inappropriate favoritism in the tangled web of political, religious, and tribal disputes in an area.[59] Similarly, while existing indigenous militias might be attractive partners in the short term, their favored status may grant them undue legitimacy in the eyes of locals and—depending on the motivations of the militia leaders—later inhibit political reform.[60]

Command Use of Communication Assets

Like all military assets, control over the drafting and dissemination of messages is a command responsibility. Unfortunately, there are some commanders—or staff officers acting on behalf of their commanders—who do not fully appreciate the subtleties involved in developing and distributing such materials. There are several unfortunate consequences possible in such situations.

PA, PSYOP, and IO personnel interviewed in 2006 research lamented the missteps made when individuals untrained in the nuances of creating messages took that responsibility upon themselves.[61] Part of the problem is the default assumption that developing such communications is easy. Officers who are good public speakers assume that they have a good gut feeling for influence communications—cultural details or insights from behavioral research be damned!

Beyond commanders trying to do it themselves based on imagined and nonexistent personal expertise, there are broader problems with commanders not taking full advantage of communication assets. Most of these problems tie back to the traditional kinetic focus of military operations and training. A commander knows how to use artillery or other fires and can relate to or more or less completely understand how they work. After employing artillery, the commander can visit the attack site or look at aerial photography and clearly and immediately discern the consequences of the fires. None of these things is true for messaging assets.

Balancing Short-, Medium-, and Long-Term Goals

Another challenge facing U.S. forces with regard to strategic communication is the need to balance short-, medium-, and long-term goals. A major

challenge of short- versus longer-term objectives involves communication objectives that differ from one phase of operations to the next. Consider a sampling of four phases of an operation: a preoperational phase ("phase 0"); a combat phase ("phase 1"); a postcombat support, stability, and reconstruction phase ("phase 4"); and a final transition to indigenous authority ("end phase"). The most significant challenge is to look toward the end phase from phase 0 forward, but each phase contains its own communication challenges beyond keeping the ultimate policy goal in mind.

In phase 0, access to the theater of operations may be the primary, though not insurmountable, challenge. Influence capabilities generally lack sufficient predeployment access to target audiences for either analysis or message transmission. Since phase 0 is furthest from the end state, the end state may not be well articulated, or the path to the end state may not be clear, which makes influence efforts in support of movement down that path challenging.

The dilemma of force is most challenging during phase 1. Information efforts in phase 1 struggle to balance short-term tactical objectives with longer-term postcombat goals. For example, during the investment of Um Qasar at the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, marines encountered regular Iraqi Army and *fedayeen* units. They responded with tank and missile fire to destroy buildings of tactical value to the enemy. Lieutenant Colonel F.H.R. Howes of the Royal Marines commented on the aftermath, noting, "When I moved through the town with my ops officer, there was an incredibly tense feeling about it. . . . The people were extraordinarily scared of the Americans."[62]

Lack of Doctrine

Dennis Drew and Don Snow define military doctrine in this way, "*Military doctrine is what we believe about the best way to conduct military affairs*. Even more briefly, doctrine is what we believe about the best way to do things [emphasis in original]."[63] Strategic communication is only minimally represented in current military doctrine. Without doctrine, new practitioners or commanders wishing to conduct strategic communication have no foundational resource for how to do so. There are many calls for formal doctrine in this area.[64]

Some within the strategic-communication community of practice think that the available doctrine is sufficient to current needs and imply that codifying doctrine where flexibility is required would actually be injurious.[65] Bottom line: personnel with backgrounds in inform, influence, and persuade specialties who now do strategic communication are OK with the lack of doctrine, but nonspecialists who get tasked with doing strategic communication or commanders who want to be better at it need more of a recipe book, and that is why there is a need for more substantial doctrine.

When I say, "doctrine is lacking" what exactly do I mean? Strategic communication is a doctrinal term, appearing in Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, JP 3–0, *Joint Operations*, and JP 5–0, *Joint Operation Planning*.[66] There is no doctrinal publication exclusive to strategic communication, either at the joint or service level. Further, the extent of the discussion of strategic communication in existing doctrine is fairly minimal. JP 1 and JP 3–0 include the definition, but little else. JP 5–0 contains the most extensive discussion.

JP 5–0 describes strategic communication as a "natural extension of strategic direction."[67] It indicates that the predominant activities supporting strategic communication are information operations (IO), public affairs (PA), and military support to public diplomacy. It contains a whole subsection on the relationship between IO and PA, suggesting they are interrelated and mutually supporting. JP 5–0 emphasizes the role of strategic communication in peacetime theater security cooperation and establishes a specific requirement that concept plans and operation plans developed by the Combatant Commands include an ANNEX Y (Strategic Communication).[68] What exists in doctrine does little to clarify definitional tensions between information operations and strategic communication.[69]

Several nondoctrinal sources are available. Principal among these is the *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy*.[70] This manual self-describes as "a pre-doctrinal document on 'Strategic Communication (SC)' and the development of communication strategy at all levels of command."[71] It contains a wealth of advice, lessons learned and best practices from operational experience, and so forth. Since it is not doctrine, however, it lacks a certain amount of oomph and compelling force.

Competing Parochial Interests

As mentioned in chapter 2, strategic communication can be defined to include the pursuit of parochial service interests rather than an exclusive focus on broader national objectives. Calling the military services' activities to recruit, maintain good public relations, and lobby Congress for funding support "strategic communication" risks weakening the term and undermining the enterprise. Further, it encourages the services to put their own sustainment needs equal to or higher than broader DoD missions and goals, which could be very detrimental to national security overall.[72]

Resolving Challenges Requires Recognizing Challenges

There is more to listing these challenges than just to complain, or to point out what a rough row the U.S. government or the Department of Defense have to

hoe. Being explicit and as exhaustive as possible in describing challenges is the first step in moving toward solutions. Some of these challenges recommend solutions simply by stating the challenge. Others are genuinely hard, but stating them clearly invites investment in their resolution. Taken together, there is no silver bullet solution to all of these problems. However, clear articulation invites partial solutions, incremental solutions, and progress. Since one of the themes of this book is to promote a crawl, walk, run model for progress on strategic communication, many of these challenges lend themselves to being assigned to one of crawl, walk, or run. Or progress in resolving a single challenge many be productively thought of in crawl, walk, run increments.

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CHAPTER 6

Improving Strategic Communication

> At Southern Command, Strategic Communication is our main battery. We're in the business of launching ideas, not Tomahawk missiles.
> —Admiral James Stavridis, Commander U.S. Southern Command[1]

Having laid out the problems with defining strategic communication (chapter 2), challenges facing those who seek to do strategic communication (chapter 4), and who in the U.S. government is or could be involved in strategic communication, the discussion now turns to ways to make improvements.

This chapter offers advice for getting better at strategic communication in three major sections. In the first, I review and summarize the key points from the many and varied existing proposals for the improvement or reform of the organization and practice of strategic communication and public diplomacy. In the second section, I offer a smattering of reported best practices in strategic communication and suggest sources the interested reader can consult for more. In the third section, I lay out my view of a crawl, walk, run progression for the future development of strategic communication and make preliminary assignment of different tasks, elements, and capabilities to one of the three developmental levels.

Major Proposals and Recommendations for the Reform of Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy

Almost since the term's rise to frequent use, U.S. strategic communication has been criticized and analyzed, and suggestions and recommendations for its improvement have proliferated. In 2008 I undertook a review of existing ideas for strategic communication reform. That research included over a dozen interviews with subject matter experts, along with consideration of dozens and dozens of reports, white papers, articles, and opinion pieces on the subject. One of my contacts at the Department of State told me about a colleague who was collecting reports on public diplomacy and strategic communication in a single vertical pile on his desk; the pile had grown so large that an improvised

wooden scaffold was required to keep it upright. The proposals in this stack are many and varied. I strongly suspect if there were more clear consensus on what needed to be done, more of it would have been done already. While I'm sure I didn't review literally everything available on the subject, I did review everything I could find. The results of this research were published by RAND in 2009 as OP-250-RC, *Whither Strategic Communication? A Survey of Current Proposals and Recommendations*. In that report I summarize and synthesize the recommendations from 36 distinct document sources. Those 36 documents recommend changes in 22 different issue areas. Four recommendations, however, occur with high frequency in these recommendations and constitute common themes in calls for improvement. These are:

- a call for leadership
- demand for increased resources for strategic communication and public diplomacy
- a call for a clear definition of an overall strategy
- the need for better coordination and organizational changes (or additions)[2]

Each is discussed in greater detail below.

Leadership

Many of the documents reviewed and experts consulted for *Whither Strategic Communication?* explicitly call for leadership on strategic communication or public diplomacy. "Leadership" is used in this context to denote several different concepts.

Several reports call for direct presidential interest and involvement, or direct presidential access for those deputized with responsibility for strategic communication.[3] This type of leadership is necessary, proponents argue, because of the sweeping reforms these reports advocate—reforms that are much more likely with direct presidential attention. Leadership of this kind would include clear evidence that strategic communication is a national priority, which would increase the attention and responsiveness of those involved in planning and execution.[4]

Other invocations of leadership refer to a need for authority. Because strategic communication requires coordination across departments and agencies, proponents indicate that interagency leadership will need coordinating authority: "These leaders must have authority as well as responsibility—authorities to establish priorities, assign operational responsibilities, transfer funds, and concur in senior personnel appointments."[5] False starts in organizing for strategic communication have revealed that "a committee of equals without an authoritative director is a recipe for inaction."[6]

Leadership is also invoked by some sources as a proxy call for better choices, with regard to both organizing for strategic communication and creating policies and statements about those policies. The president is the United States' "communicator-in-chief" and is advised to maintain a personal awareness of global public opinion and how it will affect (and be affected by) policy.[7] Advocates indicate that showing this kind of leadership requires not only mindfulness of the communication implicit in policies and decisions but also the inclusion of communication specialists at "the take offs, not just the crash landings."[8]

In a similar vein, proponents use a call for leadership as a call for clear direction. One paper laments "the lack of clear, articulate strategy from the national leadership" for strategic communication.[9] Clear direction can include both the prioritization of strategic communication and its inclusion in the foreign policymaking process[10] and direction on strategic goals and communication themes.[11]

Resources

There is strong consensus that strategic communication and public diplomacy are underresourced. Most of the existing published recommendations advocate increases in both personnel and funding for programs and activities. Many experts advocate quite substantial funding increases—three- to fivefold in certain areas.[12]

Define Overall Strategy

Roughly one-third of the documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* advocate the development of a clearly defined overall strategy. Such calls range from the very general ("this country should identify what it stands for and communicate that message clearly")[13] to the specific. Multiple GAO reports call for strategy statements regarding specific objectives, such as how DOS intends to implement public diplomacy in the Muslim world,[14] how private-sector public-relations techniques will be incorporated into DOS efforts,[15] and how to include measurable program objectives, implementation strategies, and resource requirements.[16]

Many of the calls for clear strategy relate to topics discussed earlier under the category of leadership.[17] According to one commentator, without a clear strategy, "the leaders of each department, agency and office are left to decide what is important."[18] Most of the sources recommending clear strategy call for highest-level strategy, as well as strategy that goes beyond strategic communication: a clear foreign policy strategy that strategic communication can support.

Organization and Coordination

The majority of sources of recommendations for strategic communication and public diplomacy suggest better coordination as a critical improvement. Many reports lament the lack of coordination of U.S. government strategic-communication efforts, both within and between agencies. Most subsequently recommend increased efforts to coordinate or new ways to organize (or otherwise support) these efforts. Some organizational change was recommended in almost every document reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* Consensus is less strong, however, on the specific organizational changes needed. These include:

- creation of a new government agency
- creation of a new independent supporting organization
- reorganization within existing organizations
- rebalancing authorities between government agencies
- creation of new advisory or coordinating positions[19]

Four of the documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* recommend the creation of a new government agency (or, in one case, the reestablishment of a former agency). These proposals met nothing but criticism from interview respondents. Such recommendations include the creation of the U.S. Agency for Public Diplomacy (USAPD),[20] the National Center for Strategic Communication (would pull public diplomacy and USIA remnants out of DOS and disestablish BBG, assuming internal broadcasting functions as well),[21] and the reestablishment of USIA.[22] Members of the Public Diplomacy Council wrote a dissent to that body's recommendation for the USAPD, asserting that the report "draws too heavily on the past and assumes that a restoration of an organization resembling USIA within the State Department, conducting the same programs but enjoying greater resources, will regain United States prestige and leadership on the global stage."[23]

While the disestablishment of USIA in 1999 is widely viewed as unfortunate,[24] commentators also identified several significant barriers to its reestablishment. First, it would take some time: the United States needs to improve strategic communication *now*, and standing up a whole new agency would be too time-consuming. Second, and compounding the first, is that the new agency would, by necessity, strip personnel from existing organizations and dismantle the existing network, thus resulting in a step backward and lost time before the next step forward is taken. Third, it is not clear that the new USIA would be a complete solution: it could solve some but not all of the problems identified with regard to current strategic communication and public diplomacy.[25]

Ten of the documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* recommend an independent or semi-independent organization for the conduct or support of strategic communication or public diplomacy. Most interview respondents were supportive of one or more of these proposals (in part, no doubt, because several respondents were coauthors of one of these reports). Among the recommended organizations are the nonprofit, nongovernmental "institution for international knowledge and communication" recommended by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Commission on Smart Power;[26] the "Center for Global Engagement" proposed by the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication;[27] and the "USA/World Trust" proposed by Kristin Lord of the Brookings Institution.[28]

All of the proposals for a new independent or semi-independent organization have ideas in common, including independence, access to expertise outside of government, a focus on research, the ability to experiment, and an emphasis on providing support and advice to the government. Sources advocating one of these organizations all emphasize the importance of independence. Such independence is considered critical for the some or all of the following reasons:

- to allow the free exchange of ideas between the government and the private sector
- to allow the organization to serve as an honest broker and provide a neutral forum
- to permit the organization to be free to take risks or experiment without directly embarrassing the U.S. government
- to enable the organization to be forward-leaning and look past immediate day-to-day crisis communication needs
- to retain agility and avoid unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles
- to permit the pooling of funds from multiple sources and avoid government restrictions on moving and using money, hiring, and so on

The reviewed reports also propose additional organizational detail (e.g., recommended funding, type of organization, oversight arrangements).

In the service of coordination or more effective organization, the majority of documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* recommend some kind of reorganization of existing government agencies. This includes reorganization within DOS (10 endorsements), DoD (6 endorsements), and the White House (9 endorsements). Also proposed is the rebalancing of authority between agencies (5 endorsements) and the addition of new advisors or coordinators in the executive branch, usually (if specified) at the National Security Council or the Office of Management and Budget (14 endorsements). The addition of new executive advisors or coordinators is the most frequently recommended organizational change in the documents and was also suggested by approximately one-third of the interview

respondents. These proposals have one or more declared aims: to improve coordination,[29] increase integration of and organizational regard for those who participate in strategic communication or public diplomacy,[30] increase the authority of those who are in charge of strategic communication or public diplomacy,[31] and place strategic-communication or public-diplomacy assets and resources where they ought to be organizationally.[32]

Several of the documents used in *Whither Strategic Communication?* and several since have called for radical changes in the Department of State. Since several strong criticisms of DOS have been mentioned in earlier chapters, I include several recommendations for improvement.

First, several reformers have suggested, in one way or another, that the Department of State broaden its embrace. This suggestions ranges from a simple admonishment to accept public diplomacy as a core mission, to Matt Armstrong's call for the department to become the Department of "State and Non-State,"[33] to William Kiehl's suggestion that State be broadened "into a true Department of Foreign Affairs."[34] To affect these changes, not only would DOS need to alter its mission statement and its culture, but the bureaucracy would need to be juggled. Specifically, "to transform Foggy Bottom in this way will require breaking the rigid hierarchy, stovepipes, and bottlenecks which make the Pentagon look lean and dynamic in comparison."[35]

Also suggested is the empowerment of State's regional bureaus. This proposal would seek to align how DOS organizes globally with how DoD is organized. Specifically, we should match DOS regions with DoD Combatant Commands (currently the two do not perfectly align), and recentralize authority for many activities above the embassies in regional divisions that can be true partners for the COCOMs.[36] The major change here is the centralization of authority from the embassies up to the regional bureaus, which would then make the regional bureau leadership functionally equivalent to combatant commanders in both rank and access to senior leadership.[37]

A final proposal addresses the DOS propensity to seek to completely control and unify messages. Rather than the current structure, which requires an often lengthy and cumbersome approval and clearance process for messages low- level foreign service personnel wish to transmit, they should "be given a pared-down clearance process to enable responsive engagement with foreign populations on important issues."[38]

Other Suggestions in the Reform Literature

In addition to the major themes noted above, the extensive reform literature reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* contains other suggestions with less individual frequency. Here I review some of these, as they directly address different challenges and areas of concern.

Better Leverage the Private Sector. Twelve of the documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* advise adoption of strategies that better leverage the private sector. The proposals for a new and independent supporting organization are an example of this. Central to this recommendation is the recognition that (1) the government cannot do it all, and (2) the government lacks the expertise to do all that it wants to. Public-private partnerships, exchanges of ideas with academe and industry, and the mobilization of various organizational actors in civil society were all recommended, with Sesame Workshop, One Laptop per Child, and similar nongovernmental organizations receiving specific mention.

Adopt Enterprise-Level or Whole-of-Government Solutions. Many of the observed pleas for leadership stem from the importance of involving the whole of government in strategic communication. According to the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, this is only possible in the presence of "a firm commitment and directive from the President to all relevant government agencies that emphasizes the importance of public diplomacy in advancing American interests."[39] Coordination is also deemed as critical because of risks of information fratricide or working at cross-purposes. Implicit in many of the calls for coordinating authority at the National Security Council (NSC) level is an imputation of strategic communication value to efforts coordinated across agencies.

Nine of the documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* call for whole-of-government or enterprise-level commitments to strategic communication. As Lieutenant Colonel Lindsay Borg states, "Strategic communication development efforts must be on the enterprise level: every public information resource must be developed with a consideration of its strategic communication role."[40] If one embraces a broad conception of strategic communication to encompass all messages (including the message content of actions), then the pinnacle of strategic communication success will require its embrace at the enterprise level.

Better Use of Research. Six of the documents reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* explicitly recommend better resourcing for and better use of research. Such research would include public-opinion data and other market research, as well as relevant academic research and policy research and analysis. Currently, this area is considered desperately underresourced. Proponents assert that existing research could and should be shared between and within agencies more effectively.[41]

Advocates note that one of the goals of involving the private sector and creating a supporting organization outside of government is to provide better access to just such research. Various reports indicate that, in addition to generating or accessing the research, internal procedures will need to be changed to take advantage of this resource.

Greater Focus on Measurement. Similar to advocacy for research is advocacy for practices emphasizing measurement. Six of the reports reviewed for *Whither Strategic Communication?* (including two separate GAO reports) make recommendations in this area. The 2007 U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication notes, "Evaluation should measure progress toward the achievement of goals, allowing managers to adjust methods and means, and make informed decisions about resources."[42] Two GAO reports find that establishing measurable program objectives facilitates planning and is a best practice observed in industry.[43] Details of these recommendations include the establishment of a culture of measurement, development of core performance indicators, and increased data-collection efforts.

Increase Technology Use and Experiment with New Technologies. Ten of the documents reviewed recommend that U.S. strategic communication and public diplomacy must adjust to the contemporary information environment and incorporate or expand the use of new technology. These recommendations range from general admonitions to "exploit [the United States'] technological edge"[44] and be better prepared to exploit new media to more specific instructions, such as increased use of network analysis and machine translation.[45] More than one interview respondent indicated a need for a technological solution and sharing strategic-communication information and research within the government.

Update or Revise Doctrine or Training and Increase Training and Education. On a related note, 10 sources from *Whither Strategic Communication?* advocate better preparation for strategic-communication and public-diplomacy personnel, either through revised doctrine and training curricula or increased training opportunities. Training for public diplomacy, training for new technology, and updated instruction manuals and doctrine can lead to better prepared practitioners. Advocates note that revising and providing such training is not free, however, but needs to be resourced.

Best Practices in Strategic Communication and Influence

In this section I lay out some of the best practices in strategic communication, some no-kidding how-to advice for folks thrown into the fire and asked to *do* this, not just think and talk about it. Due to space constraints it is only a portion of a single chapter. Let's face it; this book is unashamedly mostly about how to think and talk about strategic communication by design. In addition to the few morsels of execution advice captured here, I point the interested reader to three other sources of lessons learned, best practices, or practical advice for those tasked with informing, influencing, or persuading:

- Todd C. Helmus, Christopher Paul, and Russell W. Glenn, *Enlisting Madison Avenue: The Marketing Approach to Earning Popular Support in Theaters of Operation*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2007.

My coauthors and I completed this study at the behest of U.S. Joint Forces Command as follow-on to our work on lessons learned from urban operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In it, we explore the possible contribution of marketing principles and lessons learned from operational experiences for influencing civilian populations in support of military operations. Not only does the monograph describe applicable marketing principles, but it also describes how they might be employed in a defense context.

Note that the idea of considering marketing principles for strategic communication often produces a sneer of derision: "Marketing? We tried that; it didn't work." For much of this "throw out the baby with the bathwater" thinking on marketing we can thank Charlotte Beers, who was undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and public affairs from 2001 to 2003 under George W. Bush. She came from professional marketing and launched the "Shared Values" campaign, which was actual advertisements (television commercials) showing positive aspects of Muslim life in the United States, televised abroad.[46] The campaign was a flop and was cancelled shortly after the commercials began to air. The problem, of course, is that people now equate this poorly conceived attempt to apply marketing *practices* in the realm of public diplomacy as a blanket condemnation of marketing *principles* in the same arena. Do not accept this faulty logic; open your mind, and download the full PDF of the *Enlisting Madison Avenue* report at: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG607/.

- United States Joint Forces Command, *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy*, Suffolk, Va.: U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center, Version 3.0, June 24, 2010.

This is a handbook of current thinking and practice aimed at strategic-communication practitioners or potential practitioners. The handbook spends a good part of a chapter (chapter 3) describing practical alternatives for the organization of staffs for the coordination and planning of strategic communication. The handbook can be downloaded from: http://www.carlisle.army.mil/DIME/documents/Strategic%20Communication%20Handbook%20Ver%203%20-%20June%202010%20JFCOM.pdf.

- Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Psychological Operations, Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures*, Field Manual 3-05.301 (FM 33-1-1)/MCRP 3-40.6A, Washington, D.C., December 2003.

This is one of the PSYOP subordinate doctrinal pubs. As indicated by the title, it provides "tactics, techniques, and procedures" for PSYOP. It is a great resource for practical "how to" for planning and executing influence missions. Chapter 4 describes the PSYOP planning process, parts of which could be applicable to any influence effort. Chapter 5 describes Target Audience Analysis in a no-kidding, practical way. Chapter 6 describes product development,

and chapter 7 includes some advice on assessment. This doctrine is available at: http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3–05–301.pdf.

With those additional source suggestions clearly stated, I'll now turn to a selection of recommended practices and practical advice. These are presented in the following order:

- planning and organization
- build a communication mind-set
- narrative and cultural context
- be there on the takeoffs, not just the crash landings
- know your target audience through segmentation and targeting
- commit the time
- better leverage good deeds
- better respond to mistakes
- understand key branding concepts
- manage and meet expectations
- establish and maintain relationships
- measure effectiveness
- improve relations with news media
- apply discipline and focus to communication campaigns
- principles of strategic communication
- "the strategic-communication process"

Each is discussed in turn.

Planning and Organization

As noted, the *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy* includes a significant discussion of alternative staffing arrangements for strategic communication. Rather than duplicating that discussion here, I refer you again to that source.

I've found several other practical recommendations for planning that are worth sharing. The first involves the integration of Annex Y (the strategic-communication annex required in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System) with the rest of a plan. Rather than isolating strategic-communication elements alone in Annex Y, strategic-communication themes should appear in (and be integrated into) the base plan at the front of the planning document, and Annex Y should correspond with and be integrated with the public-affairs and information-operations annexes.[47]

Second, all statements of commander's intent should include a commander's desired information end state.[48] The inclusion of an information end state will guide subordinate plans (and branches and sequels) such that they comply with the commander's stated intent and provide just a little bit more guidance and context for subordinates in their autonomous decision-making in support of the mission.

For those of you not familiar with the role of the commander's intent, here is a somewhat banal example. The traditional commander's intent might be: "Remove the insurgent threat from village X." Subordinates executing on this guidance have the whole military toolbox open to them: they could level the village, cordon and search, or use a variety of softer approaches. Now imagine the implications if the following information end state is additionally specified: "If possible, leave the population of village X neutral to our presence." That really changes the approaches subordinates are likely to take. It also allows the commander to assign explicit priorities to kinetic versus informational outcomes, or short-term versus long-term. There may be cases where informational end state doesn't matter, and the commander's intent really is "kill 'em all!" In the vast majority of situations, however, that won't be the case. If commanders think about and are explicit about communication and information end states, their subordinates will have no choice but to do so as well. Under this construction, while the commander accepts responsibility for conceiving the information end state, his subordinates naturally accept more responsibility for achieving it than they would be forced to if it were left unstated.

This is such a good idea that the Marine Corps has already listed it as a practical solution to strategic-communication coordination problems in their 2010 *Marine Corps Functional Concept for Strategic Communication*.[49]

Build a Communication Mind-Set

To build toward more effective strategic communication, decision-makers need to adopt a communication mind-set. To do this, everyone needs to progressively learn to ask four questions. These questions follow a crawl-walk-run logic:

1. What does my planned action or utterance communicate?
2. What does the colleague to the left or right of me have planned, and what do our actions jointly communicate?
3. What *should* I communicate in order to support the clearly articulated goals of the USG (or my commander's information end state or a desired information effect)?
4. What have I learned interactively (through two-way communication, iteration, experience) that should be fed back into the process to better support questions 1–3?

Narrative and Cultural Context

Those who study influence tell us about the importance of storytelling in connecting with an audience in a compelling way. In broader influence

efforts (focused on more than one person at a time and in more than a single instance), we usually refer to such storytelling as narrative. Narratives are particularly powerful when connected to events and in explanation of those events. Narratives can and do compete in a public's imagination to be *the* narrative of an event.

Consider, for example, the narrative of the disaster of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005. The core of the relevant objective facts were that levees failed, and storm waters were predicted to and did cause disastrous flooding in the city, and many who should have evacuated did not. Competing narratives proposed to lay blame on different parties for difficulties with evacuations. Some narratives laid the blame on the government for failure to build adequate levees, failure to adequately convey the severity of storm and flood threat, and failure to provide sufficient evacuation assistance. There were separate narratives blaming the federal government, the state government, the city government, or various combinations of all three.[50] Other narratives blamed residents, either for their choice to reside below sea level, their choice to ignore evacuation calls and ride it out as they had done for previous storms, or their tardy decisions to evacuate. A third strand of narratives blamed objective economic conditions, in that areas vulnerable to flooding were predominantly lower-income neighborhoods, and many of those who chose not to evacuate did so because they lacked the means to do so.

The outcome of a competition of narratives is the formation of a dominant narrative, which is then broadly accepted as *the* narrative of an event. Clearly, certain narratives better favor the interests of, or generate more or less sympathy for, the parties involved. How, then, can you harness the power of narratives on your behalf?

Using narratives is certainly more art than science. *Recognizing* alternative narratives for a different context is also a valuable skill, and perhaps a bit easier. Patrick Allen offers eight ways to change a message, all of which might be useful regarding narrative and counter-narrative:

- Create a new message.
- Modify an existing message.
- Change the level of attention to a message.
- Co-opt an existing message.
- Subvert a message.
- Distract attention from a message.
- Ignore or provide no response to a method (silence).
- Restrict access to a message.[51]

Others remind us that narratives in some fundamental sense are about storytelling, and that stories are told within the confines of broader cultural contexts. This is one of the reasons that culture is so important in planning and

contextualizing strategic communication, because different cultures contain preexisting and different mythologies, stories, and major narrative themes. "If we hope to influence people, then we have to enable them to see that what we are saying fits with their story; or, at least, that it is not so far removed from their story that they think that what we are saying is ridiculous or that we are lying."[52]

Another concrete piece of advice in considering narratives and explanations is to "start with why rather than what."[53] If a narrative or a communication starts with an explained motivation, a why, then recipients of that message get both a better understanding of the communicator (or the government he or she represents) *and* is faced with an opportunity for empathy with stated motives. With a clear and plausible motive laid out first, then intended actions, policies, and so forth, can follow. If the "why" was accepted and the "what" logically connects to the pursuit of that motive, acceptance of the whole package is much more likely. If the "why" was accepted but the "what" doesn't clearly connect, then you might at least get credit for good intentions, or might be able to start a productive dialogue about alternatives and how you chose a particular policy or set of actions, rather than just uncomprehending resistance.

Starting with why rather than what also forces you to be clear and explicit about your motives. If your real motives are in some way fundamentally unattractive to a potential audience, then you shouldn't be surprised if they are resistant to your policies and your communications.

Be There on the Takeoffs, Not Just the Crash Landings

As Murrow famously quipped and I have repeatedly mentioned in this book, to help with the crash landings, you need to be in on the takeoffs. This advice is broadly applicable and suggests both including trained communicators in your planning process and considering strategic communication early in that process. Torie Clarke notes that, if involved, "the communications staff can push hard on policy or operations people who may not have thought through all the potential consequences of a decision. Good communications people tend to be a paranoid lot. They can often spot a truly awful disaster before it occurs."[54]

In a military context, strategic communication can and should be a prominent part of "phase 0" or shaping aspects of an operation. Effective use of strategic communication prior to a military operation could either lay the groundwork for operational success, or, in some cases, preclude the need to actually launch more kinetic operations.[55] The kind of engagement that accompanies humanitarian relief and international aid or assistance missions can be useful in this regard.

Including an information end state in the commander's intent also pushes in this direction. By including consideration of information at the takeoff

(when the commander's intent is stated), what might be considered a crash landing ends up being better articulated and stands a better chance of being avoided.

Know Your Target Audience through Segmentation and Targeting

Through the process called "segmentation and targeting," modern businesses identify and become intimately familiar with like-minded and well-defined groups of individuals who are most likely to want or need a given product or service. Businesses then tailor products and promotions to the segment's unique needs, wants, and behaviors. Segmentation and targeting involve a three-stage process:

- creation of segments
- evaluation of segment attractiveness
- selection of segments to target[56]

Influence can follow the same principles. In fact, one of the foundational elements of the PSYOP planning process is Target Audience Analysis (TAA).[57]

In industry, firms go to great length to collect data about segments and markets. They use surveys, polls, focus groups, taste tests, interviews, observations, and other forms of market research. Government influence efforts seldom have the time or resources that private firms have available, but the same techniques are applicable. In theater, such information could come from enemy prisoner-of-war interrogations, focus groups, and surveys. Where the population is hesitant to speak with military personnel, employ third-party researchers. Military intelligence (and the broader Intelligence Community) should have resources dedicated to finding out just the kind of information necessary to conduct target-audience analysis.

Target-audience analysis seeks to achieve four objectives: (1) the identification of optimal target audiences or segments, (2) some assessment of the amenability to influence of that audience, (3) identification of the best process to influence that audience, (4) identification of triggers to cause measureable change in the audience.[58]

Accomplishing these four objectives is complicated and hard to do, but essential for success. In order to meet these objectives, you will need to

- develop an understanding of the problem space by breaking down the general problem into smaller logically connected parts. Identify the behavior or attitudes whose change will measurably contribute to achieving your objectives;
- identify the group that is most accessible, amenable to influence, and closely related to the target behavior or attitude;
- research the target group and determine as much as possible its psychological, cultural, and social characteristics;

- identify and analyze groups related to the target group in terms of their accessibility, amenability to influence, influence over, and credibility with the target group.[59]

Commit the Time

"To do public diplomacy properly requires time, preparation and patience."[60] This applies to most efforts in the inform, influence, and persuade arena, and is in stark contrast with traditional kinetic activities, where targeting cycles are usually less than 24 hours and destructive consequences can be directly observed. Influence is subtle, complex, and takes time, sometimes lots of time, to show impact. Conducting engagement and building relationships to the point where influence is possible takes time.[61]

The solution is simple: plan ahead, act early, and be patient (see figure 6.1).

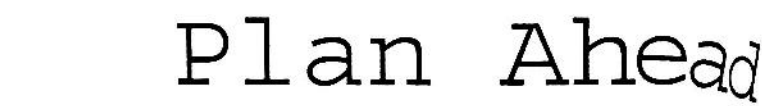

Figure 6.1: Plan Ahead

Better Leverage Good Deeds

The U.S. government does lots of unambiguously good things, but many of them go unnoticed. Good for good's sake is good, but good for good that is noticed is better.

Better leveraging good deeds is nontrivial. First, you don't want to overdo self-promotion and convey the impression that you've done a good deed so you can brag about it rather than because it was a good thing. Second, as noted in the previous chapter, good news usually isn't news; it is much easier to get a story about a bombed hospital in the news than a story about a repaired one.

That said, there are several ways to better leverage good deeds. First, make sure the good deed doers are part of the strategic-communication coordination and planning process; these folks (let's say USAID and military civil-affairs personnel for clarity in discussion) need to be involved in the planning and need to be committed to communicating the good they are doing. Second, some selectivity and prioritization of good deeds may be necessary for maximum influence impact. Consider that "many reconstruction projects take several months to be completed; their impact is all but invisible to the

majority of the indigenous population until that time. Implementing projects that have immediate impact and high visibility is critical to establishing U.S. force credibility and presence."[62]

Better Respond to Mistakes

Nobody is perfect. Mistakes happen, and mistakes or allegations of mistakes need to be answered. "No matter what's being alleged, charges unanswered are charges assumed to be true."[63]

There are a few general principles that should structure strategic-communication preparations for responding to mistakes. First, where possible, be the first to expose negative news.[64] When a mistake has been made or an accident has happened, get out there and admit it, preferably before anyone else can accuse you of it. Protecting credibility is more important over the long term than the short-term negative consequences of whatever error has been committed.

Second, admissions of mistakes should be made by someone at the appropriate level of responsibility. The key here is "appropriate," and the challenge is matching the possible severity of a mistake with the right level of accepting responsibility. Misjudging in either direction can be costly. For example, if an errant bomb lands in a house and kills the residents, we know that the best course of action is to admit the error first and take responsibility. Should the commanding general in the theater of operations make the announcement and apology? Probably not. While he should (and could) in some sense take responsibility, no one believes the accident is actually his fault, and an announcement and apology from such a high level might lend the incident more gravity than might be desired. How about having the announcement come from the pilot who released the errant weapon? Again, probably not the best choice. While those who hear the admission would probably be perfectly willing to believe that the mistake is the fault of the pilot, an announcement from that level of responsibility smacks of scapegoatism. Further, that would be particularly rough duty for a pilot who probably already feels terrible about his or her personal role in the tragedy and is an unfair burden to place on an individual war fighter. Whether or not the accident was due to pilot error or was because of a fault in the technical equipment, an error in the call for support from a forward air controller on the ground or a product of the intensity of the combat coupled with the boundary conditions of the rules of engagement, you probably don't want to put a trigger puller behind the microphone for such an admission. Best would be a senior officer who knows the details of the operation, the details of the equipment; someone who has enough authority to make a sincere apology and offer necessary restitution and promise steps to minimize or avoid

future accidents of this sort, but not someone so high ranking as to make a mountain out of a mole hill. When in doubt, and as a rule of thumb, higher authority figures are better. If the only choice is theater commanding general (CG) and the pilot, go with the CG.

As for planning and coordination, effectively dealing with mistakes requires a constant "worst case scenario" mind-set. If a communication specialist is included in the planning of all operations (and one should be), then they can ask, what could go wrong? Even if the odds are low, having in place an idea of what kinds of accidents are possible enables planning for responses. To be effective, a reporting mechanism must be in place: in order to announce the mistake first, you need to know about it first. If reporting gets to the right level quickly, then further details should quickly be collected, and an appropriate response from a preplanned list of possible authorities can be made. Such a list could actually be from a planning matrix that indexes possible mistakes or errors against the severity of the error to designate an appropriate responding authority. Sure, it can be tricky to figure out exactly who to have make such announcements, so grapple with that and plan for it beforehand.

Understand Key Branding Concepts

Effective firms develop clear and cohesive brands. The brand represents not just the products sold, but the whole customer experience, including every interaction with the firm, its personnel, or its products.[65] Intended or not, all firms have brands. Similarly, governments, countries, and military services all have brands.

Like narratives, branding provides another useful way to think about the long-term consequences of a sequence of messages or signals. At its most basic, it prompts thinking about how target customers (audiences) will perceive possible actions or messages and how they have perceived what has been said and done before. Even if unmanaged, what is the baseline brand of the government or the military force?

Formal branding as practiced in the commercial sector involves careful market research to craft a desired brand identity and then internal synchronization and management to achieve that brand. Both of these aspects have relevance in the government influence context.

First, have a brand identity in mind. Brands of governments or government agencies aren't likely to be as clear or as commercial as brands in industry and may vary from context to context. A desired brand cannot be something you are not; brands must be true.

Second, synchronize your personnel around your brand identity. Make it something that motivates them and is easy for them to understand and to

represent. If your personnel live your brand, it will be much easier for target audiences to recognize and embrace your brand. Marketers recommend the following strategies for brand-workforce synchronization to ensure consistent customer-service delivery:

- Create a brand-driven organization.
- Address customer complaints quickly.
- Inventory all brand-customer touchpoints.
- Properly select and train the sales force.[66]

As an example, one of the most effective brands in a military context that I have seen was the slogan Major General James Mattis used for his 1st Marine Division in Iraq in 2003. "No better friend—no worse enemy."[67] This was the perfect guiding principle for stability and reconstruction efforts in Iraq at that time. "No better friend"—we are here to help you, sweat for you, build and work with you ... but, "no worse enemy." Shoot at us, and we will kill you. Not only did this slogan fit the context perfectly, it also worked very well for synchronizing the relevant personnel internally. "No worse enemy" tied very nicely into the essence of the Marine Corps ethos and "every Marine a rifleman." It made it clear that the marines were still allowed to respond to lethal force with lethal force. "No better friend," however, made clear to these same marines what the important part of the mission was and served as a way to challenge and motivate them to be still more helpful and more supportive of those who chose to work with the marines for the betterment of Iraq.

Manage and Meet Expectations

One of the oft repeated mantras of strategic communication is to seek to minimize the say-do gap. To do so, you can focus on say, do, or both. Expectation management starts with what you say.

Don't make promises you can't keep. When in doubt, give conservative estimates. Underpromise and overdeliver. Of course, sometimes, you aren't the one setting the expectations. In the early years of Operation Iraqi Freedom, U.S. forces were often plagued by what got called "man on the moon syndrome." In this case, Iraqi expectations were set unreasonably high because of high expectations for the wonder of American technology. "You can put a man on the moon, how come you can't fix my [plumbing, electricity, etc.]?" When expectations have been set to unrealistic levels, don't ignore it, but do what you can to promote and advertise realistic expectations. Where possible, point out the source of the unreasonable expectations and either distance yourself from that source, discredit it, or disconnect it from the current context.

Establish and Maintain Relationships

The most effective means of positive influence is through engagement, and the most effective engagement is a positive long-term relationship. Such relationships cultivate trust, permit sustained dialogue, and build friendships. As we note in *Enlisting Madison Avenue:*

> All personnel who come into contact with noncombatants should be reminded of the power of personal relationships and encouraged to create them, thereby contributing to positive attitudes. This requires more than one-off interactions. Sustained presence reinforced by repeated contact and dialogue magnifies the impact of these relationships.[68]

Measure Effectiveness

How do you know it works? If you want to be doing better, how do you know what to change? Evaluation and assessment are central to the effective management or any program or campaign, and strategic-communication campaigns are no exception. As noted in chapter 5, measuring influence is hard. However, just because something is hard doesn't mean it isn't worthwhile to try.

One piece of practical advice is to emphasize measureable objectives. If you have clear goals for your influence campaign, it will be much easier to tell if you are meeting them or not. A caveat: if your goals can only be imperfectly measured, remember the underlying goal and don't get too sucked in by the imperfect measurement. There is a frequently documented phenomenon in education called "teaching to the test," where instruction focuses on skills necessary to pass a standardized test rather than on the broader skills the test is supposed to evaluate.[69]

Second, of course, is measurement. "To measure and assess the collective psyche of an audience, you need to gauge what people think and know what influences them. Polling, surveys, focus groups, media assessment, and media metrics all play a role. All are imperfect, but they still can provide invaluable insight."[70]

Measurement doesn't have to be peer-reviewed journal article quality. "Field expedient" measurements can be just fine.[71] One concrete suggestion in that category is to remember that sometimes the plural of "anecdote" really is "data." Systematically collecting anecdotes over time can create a simple longitudinal data stream. Coupled with other data tracked over time, this can create valuable trend and time series information. Examples of such serial anecdotes can be repeated answers to a few structured questions answered as part of the debrief of troops returning from patrols, or, impressions of attendance, receptivity, and attitude at regularly scheduled events, say a quarterly speaker's series. The key insight is that information that in a single instance isn't all that useful (for example, a platoon leader's assessment of the

proportion of people waving and/or smiling during a foot patrol) can become very useful if reported using the same procedures over and over again.

Improve Relations with News Media

While personal relations are one of the best ways to exchange information with someone and nontraditional media reach and influence an increasingly wide range of audiences, traditional news media remain a major path for message dissemination. Good relations with individual reporters, specific news outlets, and the press in general have advantages for strategic communication.

Several pieces of practical advice expand on the general admonition to improve relations. First, make it easy for reporters to do their jobs. Include them. Talk to them. Give them context and background information so that they do not have to figure it out themselves and risk getting it wrong. Give reporters access to commanders and to operators, not only to public-affairs personnel. Embed reporters within units. Previous RAND research shows that embedding has benefits from the military perspective.[72] Outreach to indigenous media and journalists is particularly important given their likely prominence in the local media environment; don't overlook them in favor of your home-country press.

Apply Discipline and Focus to Communication Campaigns

Marketing campaigns are systematic, disciplined, and focused. Strategic-communication campaigns should be too. Several steps from traditional planning for marketing campaigns may add value to your strategic communication plans:

- Clearly delineate your objectives and goals.
- Know your market and competition.
- Design a product just for them.
- Create messages that stand out and are motivating.
- Get the message out.
- Monitor and evaluate the success of the campaign.[73]

Principles of Strategic Communication

As part of a larger DoD Strategic Communication (SC) education initiative, the "Principles of Strategic Communication" were initially developed during the first Strategic Communication Education Summit in March 2008, at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia. The principles were then refined through the collaborative efforts of DoD, State Department, and civilian educators. These principles are repeated in many of the recent DoD publications on strategic communication, which is OK, because they provide some good guidance. Find them in table 6.1.

Table 6.1: The Principles of Strategic Communication

Leadership-Driven Leaders must lead the 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

Source: Department of Defense, *The Communicator: A Summary about Strategic Communication for DoD Leaders*, Vol. 1, Ed. 7, September 2008.

"The Strategic-Communication Process"

Of similar origin to the DoD principles of strategic communication is the DoD strategic-communication process. It is also a regular presence in DoD discussions of strategic communication and in instructional seminars on the subject. It portrays strategic communication as a cyclical process of continuous iteration and feedback (see figure 6.2).

Because it is a loop, you can begin wherever you want. Outside the loop as a necessary input are your overall operational objectives and the kinds of information outcomes that will support those objectives. For discursive purposes let us start to review the cycle in the upper left with the Analyze phase. In this part of the process you generate the information you need about prospective audiences, cultural contexts, and how to recognize and measure desired change. In the Planning phase, you plan and strategize, integrate all of your operations that communicate, message, or signal, including both kinetic and nonkinetic operations. In the Execute phase you message and signal, both kinetically and nonkinetically. In the Assess phase you evaluate not only the actions and their outcomes but also the various measures being used themselves. Assessment provides input back into Analyze, where new information about audiences may be sought, or new connections made between desired outcomes and what might be observable.

The Crawl, Walk, Run Progression for Strategic Communication

As we try to get better at strategic communication, we need to remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. There are many gaps between what we currently do well in this arena and all the things we'd like to do well in pursuit of a

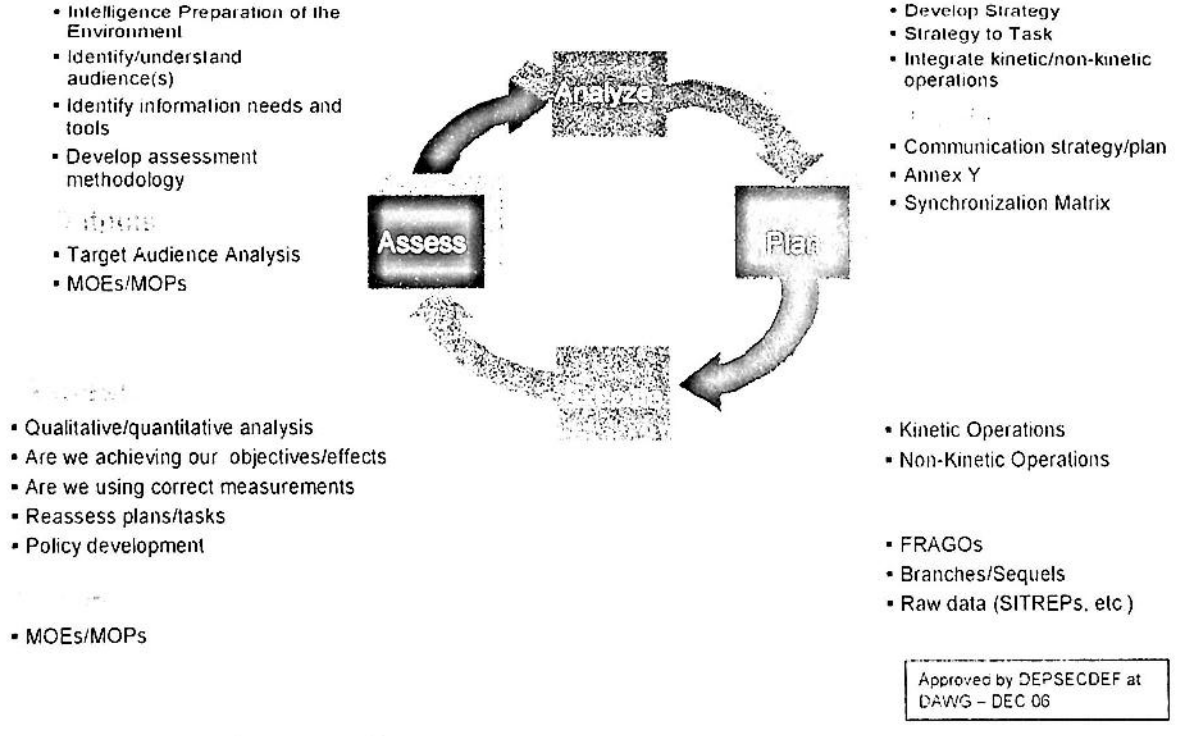

Figure 6.2: The Strategic-Communication Process
Source: Department of Defense, *Strategic Communication Science and Technology Plan*, Washington, D.C., April 2009, http://www.dod.mil/ddre/doc/SC_ST_Plan_FINAL_public.pdf.

fully mature vision of strategic communication. It follows from this insight that there should be a logical progression toward closing gaps and building capabilities related to this area. To propose such a progression, I borrow from an often used military training metaphor: the crawl, walk, run progression. Before you can walk, crawl; before you can run, walk. When we consider all of things that could go into strategic communication, rather than getting into an argument about which ones are most important, I propose instead we ask, which ones are easiest and which ones are foundational for, or logically prior to, the others? In short, which do we need to develop to progress to the crawl level of strategic communication, and which should be considered part of the higher walk level, or the highest run level?

In what follows I give a provisional set of answers, the capabilities I'd like to see developed for or in support of strategic communication and the crawl, walk, run level with which I think they are best aligned. I fully recognize that others may disagree with my prioritization, and may want to see some capabilities emphasized earlier or later. I take no umbrage at this and urge proponents to get their favored capabilities, structures, or processes funded and fielded when they feel the time is right, recognizing that some things really are logically prior to others but that there is no penalty for concurrent development.

The Crawl Level of Strategic Communication

The things I'd like to see developed at the crawl level are foundational, not necessarily easy. The central emphasis at the crawl level is on avoiding self-contradiction, either through information fratricide or through say-do gaps. I include only three steps in the crawl level, but they are big steps:

- align actions and messages
- formal strategic communication advocacy/advisory roles
- imperatives for thinking about strategic communication

I discuss each below.

Align Actions and Messages

This crawl level element starts progress on two parts of what I have called the unassailable core of strategic communication: the fact that actions communicate and the need to coordinate and deconflict to avoid information fratricide. The most persuasive, culturally astute engagement project still fails when it is undermined by discordant actions or signals originating elsewhere in the government. In order to align actions and messages, processes (and possible staffs, offices, or other organizational bits) need to be in place to

coordinate messages and also coordinate actions for their messaging, imagery, and signaling content. These processes (and structures?) need to be present at all levels of the government capable of producing actions or messages.

If someone proposed that aligning messages belonged at the crawl level of strategic communication but that aligning actions was higher level, I would not strongly disagree. I think, however, it is easier to design coordination processes to include everything you want to coordinate (actions *and* messages) from the outset rather than trying to expand their embrace later. Further, should strategic communication fail to include the coordination of the signals and messages that actions and images send, then, in my view, strategic communication has failed.

Formal Strategic Communication Advocacy/Advisory Roles

Informing, influencing, or persuading is often an afterthought in pursuit of other sorts of goals. Further, the expertise necessary to be thoughtful about the information implications of a planned activity or proposed course of action is often not resident in the group making such plans. At the crawl stage in the development of strategic communication, we need to have information and influence professionals available to decision-makers and commanders, and embedded in relevant staff processes. All planning cells should have a formal communication devil's advocate who constantly (though hopefully not annoyingly) asks, "what message will that send?" Ideally, this individual will also have (or at least have access to) the necessary expertise to help planners figure out what message would be sent and further to figure out how to plan actions, events, or messages that send desired messages.

Commanders should have an information and influence specialist close at hand. Not somewhere on their staff but *close at hand*. In the military context, the ideal relationship would be the privileged position enjoyed by public-affairs officers relative to the commander: special advisors to the commander, on staff charts, but reporting to no one in the staff other than the commander. For this to work, however, the individuals filling this role would need to embrace the whole of the inform, influence, and persuade mission set, not just inform missions, which many public-affairs officers might be hesitant to do. Further, this advisory position should be a full-time job and should not be a dual-hat position with the traditional public-affairs role as commander's spokesperson (another full-time job).

Finally, while such advisors or advocates are needed now and are part of the crawl level of strategic communication, they may not be necessary in the far future or at the run level. Once all policymakers, commanders, and other authorities within the government have truly embraced a communication mind-set, they won't need an outside expert to remind them to think about

the messages and signals that their actions and policies produce; they'll do it themselves as a natural part of their decision-making and planning processes. Communication expertise will still be necessary, but it can reside at subordinate positions in an organization, secure in the knowledge that they will be sought out when needed rather than ignored or marginalized.

Imperatives for Thinking about Strategic Communication

Aligning actions with messages begins work on two of four elements of the unassailable core of strategic communication. I would be remiss if I left the crawl level without something that starts on the other two as well. If informing, influencing, and persuading is important, and if effective influence requires clear objectives (the remaining two elements of the unassailable core, if you've lost track), then commanders and decision-makers must be made to think about and establish objectives for these activities. While the presence of a communication advisor should encourage such thinking, some kind of forcing function or structural imperative would be even better.

In the military context, I have just the thing in mind. Earlier in this chapter, I describe the role of the commander's intent in shaping military plans and subordinates' actions, and Professor Dennis Murphy's proposal for the addition of a requirement for a desired information end state in commander's intent. It would really help us push through to crawl-level mastery if such a requirement were put in place. Appropriate imperatives need to be identified for other government agencies.

The Walk Level of Strategic Communication

Once foundational processes and structures are in place, it becomes time to expand the scope. Progressing to the crawl level should leave us coordinating our actions and messages so that they don't directly conflict with each other, and with some kind of individual reminding us, or planning requirement forcing us, to think about and plan for messages and signals in pursuit of identified goals. The crawl level really is the first baby steps: intentional and thoughtful messaging and avoiding obvious self-contradictions and other forms of information fratricide.

The walk level is where things really start to come together and more powerful capability starts to emerge. I identify eight steps that could be taken as part of the progression at the walk level:

- evaluation and assessment
- nested goals from top to bottom
- better coordination
- listening

- understanding culture
- understanding human dynamics
- understanding media environments
- media monitoring and counterpropaganda
- knowledge-management solutions
- leveraging civil society

I discuss each in turn.

Evaluation and Assessment

Once you've accepted the idea that you can meet important objectives through coordinated signaling and messaging, and put in place structures to encourage that, you need to know whether or not you are succeeding in those efforts. Assessment is essential to improving efforts and campaigns. If you know what is working and what isn't, you can make adjustments, corrections, and improvements. At the other end of the planning process, if you can demonstrate effectiveness, it will be easier to gain further funding and support for further efforts.

Desired measures and evaluation criteria should be a required part of the planning process. Assessment needs to include the description of the baseline state and evaluation and assessment criteria that measure change from that baseline state in order to allow the demonstration of actual movement toward objectives.

Nested Goals from Top to Bottom

If crawl-level imperatives have forced agencies and commands to have stated strategic-communication objectives (commander's information end states, desired information effects, or otherwise), then the next level of progress is to connect those objectives to levels above and below, and to adjacent organizations. Rather than happening piecemeal or from the middle levels out as the previous sentence might be taken to imply, this works best from top to bottom. Clear information and influence goals should be articulated at the national level, with clear supporting and subordinate objectives. Various government agencies could then make sure to align and connect their communication objectives with those broader national goals, while making sure their objectives are articulated such that subordinate elements in that agency can nest within them.

Better Coordination

At the walk level, it is time to start moving coordination and integration from "not conflicting" toward "mutually supporting and reinforcing" or maybe even "integrated." Here, communication goals are pursued not just through individual messages and signaling actions that don't conflict with

each other but as part of coordinated campaigns. This is a blanket statement meant to include a range of efforts to better leverage coordinated capabilities for specific goals. Synergies should appear as themes are shared and reinforced by different sources.

Listening

Another significant development at the walk level is to begin to be mindful of the other participants in the information environment. Everything at the crawl level emphasizes activities internal to the government: making sure we don't send mixed signals or broadcast conflicting messages, making sure we are aware of and intentional with the signals we're sending, and so forth. Once we've started to get our own house in order, it is time to turn to audiences and other players. This step (along with the next three) orients in that direction.

If strategic communication is really about communication, communication implies a two-way exchange. At the crawl level, we focused only on the messages and signals we are sending, and not at all on the receiving. To progress to the walk level, we need to get better at listening to foreign publics. Listening involves not just engagement but also research and monitoring of audiences, their perceptions, and their preferences. "The United States should know in advance the likely reaction and level of resistance to its policies and how America can best communicate them."[74]

Part of listening is related to evaluation and assessment, and the same sorts of research can support both. Part of listening, however, is the other half of conversation, and includes genuine dialogue, and might (and should) provide feedback to (and possible compromises for) policies and future policy. Listening is in part about figuring out what audiences are ready to hear and then identifying the intersection between what they want to hear and what you want to say. The other part of listening, however, is figuring out what foreign audiences want to hear and then considering those preferences in policymaking. Even if the ultimate decision is to make policies that align with our preferences rather than theirs, the fact that others' preferences were considered and the kinds of arguments and discussions that surrounded those considerations might themselves be useful strategic-communication themes.

Cultural Understanding

If, as I've proposed, we're paying attention to others at the walk level, an important part of that should include attention to culture. For messages to be really effective, not only do they have to not contradict each other, but they also need to be comprehensible to and resonate within a cultural context. For

listening to be really effective, you have to understand where the other parties to your dialogue are coming from both figuratively and literally.

Cultural knowledge can make important contributions to many aspects of strategic communication. The most obvious contribution is in the details of message and signal design and transmission, where closing the gap between what you intend to say or signal and what those signals actually mean to recipients is so important. Cultural knowledge is also foundational for effective listening and for effective measurement, assessment, and evaluation. Efforts to use (or compete with) narratives should be mindful of existing cultural narratives and likely interpretations of different descriptions of events.

Cultural knowledge is potentially almost infinite in its possible depth and complexity, given the large number of cultures in the world and their various nuances. How much cultural knowledge do we need for effective strategic communication? Some is better than nothing, and more is almost always better, but I think cultural knowledge needs to follow its own crawl, walk, run progression. To start to make messages minimally context specific, you need translators and minimal cultural expertise just to avoid embarrassment. A minimum level of cultural knowledge should support engagement, though personal presence and universals of face to face interactions between humans might let you get by with a bare minimum. To effectively do listening outside of the context of personal engagements and to avoid bias from cultural nuance in assessment, you need (or need access to) even greater cultural expertise. That same level of cultural expertise will support context-specific goal setting and preparation of themes across broad cultural segments. To realize maximum persuasive impact from all aspects of an influence campaign will require really detailed cultural knowledge.

Understanding Human Dynamics

Of course, to effectively influence people you need to understand more than just their culture. You need a baseline appreciation for how people react and interact, and what the core tenets of effective influence are. A lot of the complexity is cultural, but a lot of the complexity is just human. "Understanding human dynamics is an essential aspect of planning for success across the full spectrum of military and national security operations."[75] In addition to the cultural expertise that is required to progress to the walk level, we also need communication expertise, and influence expertise, to include strong foundational social science resources for understanding human dynamics.

Understanding Media Environments

Matching message to appropriate media and understanding the dynamics of a specific media environment is a walk-level strategic-communication

activity. Once messages and signals are intentional and coordinated, an emphasis on getting the messages and signals out more robustly becomes worthwhile. There is little point, for example, to buying AM radio airtime for messaging if no one in the target audience uses AM radios.

While understanding media environments starts with segmented media-use patterns in a target context, it can be considerably more complex. Knowing not just what information media people in an area use but which ones they trust can be valuable, as can patterns of frequency of use or times of day of use. Identifying popular local media personalities, which population segments cleave to which of those personalities, and whether they are popular because they are funny or because they are a trusted authority (for example), is also very useful information when planning or adjusting an information campaign.

American political campaigns have honed this level of media environment analysis to a high art in the domestic context. Doing the same in support of strategic communication in foreign contexts will require similar levels of research as well as significant cultural expertise.

Media Monitoring and Counterpropaganda

The others in the information environment include not only those with whom we wish to engage or communicate but also other sources of messages and signals. The vast majority of these other participants are neutral or indifferent to the United States and her goals, but some are adversaries. Further, whether the source is adversarial or not, the messages and signals of others can work against our efforts, can support or efforts, or can (at the very least) compete with our messages and signals for bandwidth and attention.

One of the possible goals for strategic communication is the countering of adversary efforts in the information environment and competition with unfavorable narratives more generally. The pursuit of that goal begins at the walk level and starts with efforts to stay abreast of what is actually being said and signaled. This requires media monitoring. Done right, this is a massive undertaking, as big as the information environment itself. The number of different languages and channels (broadly conceived) of information flow is simply staggering.

At the walk level, media monitoring should encompass key channels and key languages relevant to current military operations, new policy initiatives, or other strategic-communication target audiences. To get some use out of the media monitoring, it should feed back into planning loops but also connect to some rapid response capability able to refute or contest erroneous stories, narratives, or messages as rapidly as possible. We already have some fledging capability to do just that. To move to the run level, media monitoring will

require robust machine translation and perhaps some further technological improvements.

Knowledge-Management Solutions

The sheer potential volume of media monitoring "take" highlights another important barrier to progress toward walking at strategic communication: knowledge management. Just because someone in the U.S. government knows something about an audience, has listened to and translated an important piece of adversary disinformation, or has a relevant cultural expert on tap doesn't mean that the person in the government who needs to act on or access that information can do so.

The examples above are just a smattering of the levels and types of information needing to be shared as part of the strategic-communication enterprise. Some is fairly straightforward: vertical integration, the sharing of nested goals up and down, should just be part of the existing policy and planning processes. Information sharing for horizontal integration, however, be it between adjacent units of a single agency (adjacent military formations) or between agencies (DoD to DOS), is nontrivial. Then there is the whole host of facilitating information: the data from the surveys, polls, focus groups, media use analyses, and other forms of relevant collection that might be useful to those beyond the original data collector or sponsor; the cultural expertise or specific contextual conclusions reached through exploitation of cultural knowledge; the take from media monitoring and the translation and analyses thereof; the products from all the listening and engagement. This is a big problem. At the walk level, solutions can be incremental and partial. To progress to the run level, however, really impressive knowledge-management solutions will be required.

Leveraging Civil Society

Several advocates encourage better leveraging civil society in support of strategic communication and public diplomacy. This is in part because "much of the expertise needed for effective public diplomacy is outside government."[76] By better leveraging civil society, run-level capabilities in cultural awareness or other areas might not need to reside inside of government and might begin to become accessible at the walk level of overall development.

The Run Level of Strategic Communication

At the run level, strategic communication is ready to fully leverage information as a focused element of national power. Strategic communication is

second nature, and fully capable. Much of what happens at the run level involves elements added at the crawl or walk level but developing and integrating them to such a degree that they reach their full potential. I discuss several specific elements as being at the run level of strategic communication:

- Analyze and preempt adversary participation in the information environment.
- Make counterpropaganda more sophisticated.
- Integrate with allies.
- Institutionalize strategic communication awareness and skills.
- Integrate the complex communication model.

Each is discussed in turn below.

Analyze and Preempt Adversary Participation in the Information Environment

As far as counterpropaganda goes, media monitoring can only take you so far. Once an adversary has put adverse content into the information environment, you have already lost the initiative and are forced to react to the adversary's play. You can be very good at reacting and can get to the point where you launch a refutation, a correction, or a counter-narrative or counter-story in a matter of minutes. But you are still reacting.

At the run-level of strategic communication, we need to find ways to preempt adverse adversary information. There are several ways we might begin to do this, but further approaches may need to be invented.

One way to get ahead of adversary propaganda is to deny them opportunities. This can be done through carefully monitoring and documenting our own actions so that when we accidentally do something that might make us look bad, we break the story first, denying the adversary any surprise or "gotcha" value, and preventing them from adding spin to the facts. Similarly, taking media monitoring into full-up content analysis and in the presence of sufficient cultural expertise (and a little red-team creativity) might make it possible to anticipate what narratives adversaries will try to create or connect with. When these are identified, it becomes possible to either preplan responses to efforts to mobilize such narratives, or perhaps even preemptively mobilize alternative narratives that would make adverse narratives less likely to gain traction.

The approach described above relies less on predicting adversary future behavior based on past behavior and opportunities available in the information environment. There are other ways to predict adversary behavior, ways that belong traditionally to the Intelligence Community. If U.S. (or allied) intelligence has penetrated adversary organizations, it may

be possible to know *exactly* what adversaries have planned as part of their strategic communication. This would necessitate intelligence penetration, awareness of intelligence requirements for foreknowledge of adversary propaganda plans, ways to route this information out of the Intelligence Community and to strategic communication, and communication capabilities prepared to seize the initiative and either disrupt adversary opportunities or counter their nascent efforts with more robust responses with the benefit of foresight.

Make Counterpropaganda More Sophisticated

In a similar vein, countering propaganda after the fact can become more sophisticated too. Adversary efforts in the information environment are already being monitored, and inaccuracies are attacked. Alternative narratives are being offered. At the run level, strategic communication has the necessary understanding of cultural and psychological nuances to engage adversary propaganda. This might take the form of debating philosophical or religious assumptions implicit in inflammatory or extreme messages. This might take the form of what one scholar advocates as "highlighting extremist contradictions" or otherwise seeking to derail adversary narratives based on flaws intrinsic in those narratives.[77] While it might seem attractive to do these things at the crawl or walk level, such direct engagement requires strong and well-developed support from sufficient cultural, historical, religious, and social science knowledge in order to avoid backfiring or generating unwanted second-or third-order consequences.

Integrate with Allies

At the run level of strategic communication it goes without saying that U.S. government messages and signals would be fully coordinated and integrated for maximum effect. Also at the run level should be some significant efforts at integration with allies. This is most important in military coalition contexts, where forces from allies and partners are operating alongside or adjacent to U.S. forces. However, there is also benefit to be realized anytime international policies or interests coincide.

International coordination and integration is a delicate matter, as there are important sovereignty and autonomy issues involved. Still, as early successes with voluntary interagency coordination headed by the National Security Council have shown, creating forums and structures for the discussion and sharing of strategic-communication planning, without any efforts to force or coerce compliance, can make important positive contributions. This may involve listening and compromising with allies and

partners, providing them access to knowledge-management systems, and very close inclusion in and sharing of strategic-communication processes and practices.

It is worth noting that even at the run level, messages and signals, though fully integrated, are not totally predetermined and controlled. Full integration is not equivalent to speaking with one voice but rather speaking with deconflicted voices that are mutually supporting. Run-level integration strikes just the right balance between centralization and control of theme and message, and autonomy and independence of individual speakers. This balance makes integration with allies possible. No ally is likely to sign up for a program of precisely controlled talking points, where every agent of both governments always says exactly the same thing; however, allies might well be willing to participate in a scheme of clearly defined and nested communication goals that provides effective forums for the discussion and planning of messages and signals and their contribution to larger, communal goals.

Institutionalize Strategic-Communication Awareness and Skills

At the run level of strategic communication, the kind of communication advocacy and advice called for at the crawl level should give way to the broader institutionalization of strategic communication. Decision-makers and staffers should know reflexively that they need to include consideration of signals and messages. Everyone should be communication minded, and relevant expertise in influence, assessment, and cultural knowledge should be present much more broadly throughout the government. All involved should know the limits of their own relevant expertise and know where in their respective organizations to go to access more.

Integrate the Complex Communication Model

While the walk level of strategic communication requires making good progress on listening and forms of engagement that embrace the two-way nature of communication, the run level of strategic communication necessitates the full embracing of what Professor Steven Corman calls the "pragmatic complexity model" of communication.[75] This model observes that influence and communication are complex, culturally constrained, and highly contingent. Maximum effectiveness in strategic communication will require recognition of these facts at all levels of strategic communication, from highest-level planning to tactical implementation of influence efforts. The foundational capabilities (listening, cultural knowledge, etc.) were developed at the walk level, but here is where it all needs to come together.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusions and the Way Ahead

> The commander who prevails in the information war is almost certain to win the war itself.
>
> —General Peter Chiarelli[1]

In chapter 2 I proposed a definition of strategic communication but, more importantly, I offered a vision of what successful strategic communication could look like. This was followed by a discussion of alternative definitions, goals, and visions of strategic communication, in chapter 3 by some history of American public diplomacy and strategic communication, in chapter 4 by a description of the strategic-communication cast, by an enumeration of challenges in chapter 5, and a collection of suggestions for doing better in this arena in chapter 6. Here I would like to reiterate my vision of strategic communication and then conclude with some suggestions for how we get from here to there.

A Vision for Strategic Communication, Reprise

I have a vision of what successful strategic communication would look like. In this vision, we have clearly stated national objectives, which contain nested subordinate objectives, which contain nested intermediate or supporting objectives, nesting all the way down to the operational and tactical level. These clear statements make it easy to see which objectives can be realized through influence or persuasion, and which can be supported through such efforts. In pursuit of these objectives, appropriate priority is given to influence. Not that influence is always the primary means for pursuing policy but that it is always considered for possible primacy in a policy or operation and is the top priority when it is appropriate for it to be.

In this vision commanders and decision-makers have a communication mindedness and consider the messages and signals their action, utterances, or planned policies send. Failing that (or as that is developing) these same

leaders have access to (and respect for) communication advocates/proponents/advisors who sit at their right hands and bring communication implications to their attention.

In this vision everyone in government speaks not with one voice like some kind of robot automaton but with their messages aligned in the same direction, because everyone understands the nested objectives and how their own efforts support those objectives, and because they have (or have access to) requisite communication training and cultural knowledge. In this vision appropriate themes and plans of action are developed in consultation with both those who are expert in communication and influence and with those who have the relevant cultural and contextual knowledge. Communication is not just one-way broadcast but is true two-way communication, engagement, or dialogue. In my vision this leads to policies shaped with our own interests as well as the interests and preferences of others in mind, policies which we support with integrated plans of action *and* communication.

If we realize this vision, we as a nation will have maximum credibility, increased respect, and as much support for our policies and operations as possible. The promise of strategic communication is *not* that everyone in the world will love us or that we will be able to pursue inherently offensive policies without opposition. Strategic communication, practiced effectively, will allow us to create international support when we seek to do good in the world and to create the broadest possible consensus that what we are doing really is good. Further, when we pursue more selfish interests, effective strategic communication will allow us to be believed when we promise not to encroach more on the interests of others than absolutely necessary.

Where Should Strategic Communication Capability Be?

One of the topics this vision is agnostic about is where in the government strategic-communication capability should reside. I, however, am not agnostic on that issue, and as part of my conclusions I want to share my thinking.

Currently, as Matt Armstrong has argued, "American public diplomacy wears combat boots."[2] Much of the funding, personnel, and technology currently employed for inform, influence, and persuade missions exists in or comes from the Department of Defense.

Many, including myself, feel that that is unfortunate. It makes much more sense for day-to-day public diplomacy to reside in a civilian agency. "Many observers, including some members of congressional committees, have criticized DOD's expansion into non-military communications and public diplomacy that they believe the State Department should undertake."[3] The DoD agrees in principle, and would prefer for DOS to have the lead in public diplomacy,

indicating that DoD activities are in a support role, and "filling the gap."[4] Congressional attention to the issue has ramped up in 2009 and 2010.

The year 2009 saw Congress concerned with DoD information operations and strategic communication, questioning whether or not DoD should be doing these things, how much money was being spent on them, and what effect was being observed. This led to the introduction of language into the 2009 Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act requiring both the DoD and the White House to report on strategic communication, the resulting responses to which have been referenced several times in this book, and which appear in their entirety in the appendices.

The year 2010 saw action in committee, particularly the House Appropriations Committee, to substantially cut funds for DoD information operations and "military public diplomacy" activities.[5]

The congressional view of the issue has not been particularly nuanced. Though we all might agree with Congress that DOS (or some other civilian agency) should have primary responsibility for public diplomacy and strategic communication, there are two aspects of the problem Congress has to date overlooked. First, just because DOS should have the preponderance of such capabilities, does that mean that DoD should have none? Second, whatever balance between military and civilian capabilities in this area is deemed appropriate, how do you get from the current state to that desired end state without losing all the capabilities you currently have? If Congress is heavy handed in stripping capabilities from DoD before DOS is ready to receive them or recreate them, there is a very real possibility that while the operation might be a success, the patient might die.

The right answer, of course, is to slowly and thoughtfully migrate some DoD public-diplomacy capabilities over to DOS. This, by the way, is exactly what the White House has proposed: "We recognize the need to ensure an appropriate balance between civilian and military efforts. As a result, a process has been initiated to review existing programs and resources to identify current military programs that might be better executed by other Departments and Agencies."[6]

The question remains, what is the right balance between DOS and DoD for strategic communication and public-diplomacy-related capabilities? Ideally, State should have the lead and the core of baseline capabilities in this area. This would, of course, require substantial changes at DOS, both in their orientation to and prioritization of public diplomacy, and in their level of funding of and capabilities for public diplomacy.

Imagining, however, that in some foreseeable future DOS's conduct of public diplomacy becomes sufficiently robust to meet baseline needs, *DoD will still need to retain significant capability in this area*. Why, you ask? Two primary reasons. First, actions communicate, and DoD *will* continue to act, and will

need capabilities to support planning and coordinating the communication content of those actions, and will also need (at a minimum) communication capabilities to explain those actions and encourage the favorable perception of those actions. Second, DoD responsibilities for responding to contingencies necessitates that they retain substantial inform, influence, and persuade capabilities.

Even the most robust Department of State that anyone imagines will still lack all of the surge capacity and expeditionary capability that will be needed to adequately respond to the kinds of crises and contingencies that we ask our military to prepare for. When the U.S. military presence in a foreign country goes from negligible to massive, who is going to be alongside the operating forces explaining (and seeking to make palatable) their presence? Military communicators. If we do away with all the military communicators, then who will conduct critical inform, influence, and persuade missions at the dawn of an emergent crisis? No one. And that is why the appropriate balance of capabilities between DoD and DOS is not zero on the DoD side.

How Do We Get There?

Hopefully, we now share much of a vision of strategic communication in common and want to realize all or part of that vision. So, how do we get there? In these final remarks I offer my high-priority ingredients for real progress on strategic communication. These include:

- Specify information end states
- Commanders, embrace strategic communication!
- Establish and propagate a communication mind-set
- Nest strategies and goals
- Separate black from white
- Publish a government-wide definition of strategic communication
- Develop doctrine and resource
- Crawl before you walk; walk before you run
- Whatever you want to call strategic communication, don't throw the baby out with the bathwater!

Each is discussed below.

Specify Information End States

I still think the best single piece of strategic-communication advice I've encountered is Professor Dennis Murphy's suggestion to require the specification of an information end state in commander's intent (see the discussion in chapter 6). Doing so will force commanders to consider the information environment and

communication consequences, and force subordinates to do so as well. Commanders could start doing this spontaneously (and I encourage you to do so, if you have a command or are Chief of Mission and are reading this!), but best would be to add the requirement to joint-planning guidance so that all commanders must specify an information end state with their commander's intent.

Commanders, Embrace Strategic Communication!

I don't care what they call it, but the extent to which commanders embrace and prioritize inform, influence, and persuade efforts determines the extent to which their subordinates commit to and conduct them effectively. As some of my RAND colleagues have noted:

> Commanders who insist that their subordinates develop a coordinated program of IO and influence operations activities and who follow up to ensure these activities take place appear far more likely to succeed in integrating influence operations into the campaign than commanders who take a more passive view of influence operations. Commanders also need to reemphasize the importance of influence operations on a regular basis.[4]

Adding a requirement for an information end state as part of commander's intent is a step toward crawl-level strategic communication. To progress to the walk or run level, we need "to move influence from the periphery of the command's thinking to its very epicenter."[5]

How do we do that? Well, commanders could read this book and see the light, or (more plausibly), we could increase the emphasis on communication and influence in the professional military education and training of officers who will become commanders. The current crop of junior officers is ripe for such education. Those who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan understand the danger of winning every battle but losing the war and have seen first hand the importance of being able to influence the local population on the outcomes of operations. As they come through Command and General Staff College (or equivalent), or the various War Colleges, let's make sure we help them connect the dots and understand better how to orchestrate and employ communication and signaling, and the importance of prioritizing such efforts in their future command roles.

Establish and Propagate a Communication Mind-Set

To get best effect from strategic communication, everyone (commanders/decision-makers and subordinates) needs to have a communication mind-set.

By communication mind-set, I mean an inclination to consider what executing a given plan will communicate or signal to others, and a willingness to include such considerations in planning. At baseline, most people are willing to do that, but in practice they either just forget or aren't very imaginative in their thinking about possible signals their plans might generate when enacted.

To their credit, the Marine Corps already formally recognizes this as a goal, even as they admit that it will be a challenge to accomplish: "The Marine Corps, largely through training and education, must expand the planning culture of the MAGTF [Marine Air Ground Task Force] so that non-kinetic tools and the cognitive domain are consistently and completely addressed in every planning problem and throughout each phase of execution."[9]

Adding communication and influence to professional military education and training will go a long way toward helping establish a communication mind-set. Years of demonstrated success at strategic communication will institutionalize it. In the meantime, I believe we need communication specialists peppered throughout our government agencies to act as advisors and advocates for and about communication and signaling.

Such advocates can ask, "what does that communicate?" when our still acculturating planners and leaders forget to, and they can also bring communication training and experience to bear to help answer that question and help identify a set of planned actions that send the desired messages and signals.

In the defense context, the ideal location for this kind of advisor is where the public-affairs officer sits in most staffs. In the typical staff chart, the PAO is part of the staff, but is off to the side, reporting directly to the commander without the interference of the chief of staff, and without any lines of authority to or from any other staff elements. This is an ideal location for communication expertise. Direct access to the commander, and a free hand to be available to and involved with all other staff elements, without any authority there, but with the compelling question, what will that communicate? always on his or her lips.

While I think the PAO staff position is the perfect position for a communication advocate, I have some hesitancy about a traditional PAO filling that role. Some PAOs (too many, in my view) cleave too strongly to the "inform, but not influence" way of thinking (discussed in chapter 2). These individuals insist on a firewall between public affairs and information operations, and represent only their narrow parochial (or stove pipe, or rice bowl; choose your metaphor) public-affairs view to the commander. This will not do.

Public affairs cannot have its cake and eat it too. They cannot retain their special relationship with the commander, a relationship that is ideal for serving as a broad spectrum communication advisor and proponent, if

they are going to keep the firewall closed and only represent their narrow specialty view. If public-affairs officers are going to be commanders' go-to guys on strategic communication, they need to embrace all of the communicators, and the whole of the inform, influence, and persuade mission. Ideally, there would be a strategic-communication cell in the staff diagram where the PAO currently is and that cell would contain representatives from some or all of information operations, public affairs, psychological operations/military information support operations, and civil affairs. This cell could also include a PAO who will serve as the commander's spokesperson (the traditional PAO role) as a full-time job in its own right. The cell chief might be a PAO, but it might also be a senior officer from one of the other specialties. Such an arrangement would help ensure that commanders still have a spokesperson, still have a public-affairs advisor, but also have broad spectrum strategic-communication advice and advocacy as the force develops its strategic-communication mind-set. Such a cell should also have representation in operations and plans, as that is where the actions start and most of the signaling comes from.

Nest Strategies and Goals

My vision of strategic communication includes purposiveness and intentionality in communication at all levels. To communicate in the national interest is easiest when the national interests are specified and include clear goals at each level. What is missing is a subordinate set of goals to connect from national strategic guidance (which is often vague) to operating organizations. In the presence of clearly articulated national objectives and intermediate or supporting subordinate goals, the talented men and women of our government and our armed forces will surprise us with how diligently and effectively they inform, influence, and persuade in support of those goals.

Even in the absence of clearly articulated higher-level goals and subordinate objectives, improvement can be made in this area. It starts with you. Whatever level you are at, write clear goals for your inform, influence, and persuade activities. Connect them to the goals one level up. If goals aren't clearly articulated at that higher level, request that clear objectives be developed. But don't wait for that to happen. Articulate your goals, and make them point toward what you think the goals should be at the higher level. If those at the higher level don't agree, that may further incentivize them to actually state their objectives. Publish your goals to subordinate and supporting organizations, and request (or order or demand, authority permitting) that they develop clear objectives that support and nest within yours. If the community of practice begins to build nesting goals from the bottom up (or

from the inside out, or whatever), eventually the authorities at the top of these organizations will harness those connections with guidance in the form of clearly articulated goals of their own.

Separate Black from White

Falsehood, deception, and manipulation cost credibility when uncovered. In the contemporary global information environment, the prospects for keeping such acts under wraps indefinitely are increasingly low. Further, the fact that some communicators (notably PSYOP/MISO) have falsehood in their toolbox is a barrier to collaboration with other communicators (see the discussion in chapter 5).

If you must retain black information capabilities (and I accept that there are compelling arguments for doing so), carve them off and sequester them from other sources of messages and signals. Don't have the same organizations and personnel conducting both truth-based and false messaging. Retain some kind of conduit or connection between those who deceive and manipulate and the rest of the communication community for deconfliction and coordination purposes, but keep such black information capabilities small and away from the light. Freeing routine communication conduits from the suspicion of falsehood both internally and externally will increase credibility and make coordination and integration easier.

Specifically, psychological operations (now military information support operations) should be doctrinally and organizationally divided to separate those who inform, influence, and persuade using true information and attributed sources from those who manipulate, mislead, and misattribute. This small residual could have a pernicious sounding name, like "information manipulation" or . . . PSYOP.[10] The firewall should be between MISO and this black capability, not between PA and MISO.

Publish a Government-Wide Definition of Strategic Communication

I strongly recommend that the White House or the National Security Council publish a formal definition of strategic communication that is intended to apply to all executive departments and agencies. Provided it is a good definition (and I understand that is a somewhat risky proviso), this would end efforts by relevant agencies to avoid strategic communication by pleading that it isn't what they do and would end debate within departments (notably the Department of Defense) by providing a single definition that must be adhered to. Unity of understanding can only help unity of effort.

If such a definition cannot (or just will not) be produced, then as a fallback position I continue to advocate that everyone add qualifiers to make clear

what element or aspect of strategic communication they intend to discuss when they use the term—say what you mean!

Develop Doctrine and Resources

A great deal of progress can be made on strategic communication simply by emphasizing it, as the handful of relatively inexpensive and modest efforts I advocate above seek to do. However, some progress in this area will necessitate a greater commitment of resources. Whatever the balance between State and Defense for public diplomacy and strategic communication, DOS needs to have much more robust inform, influence, and persuade capabilities.

Further, while there are pros and cons to developing doctrine regarding strategic communication, I believe that such development is essential. The roles, responsibilities, and relationships between various communicating and signaling functions should be clarified and solidified in doctrine. Doctrine for planning should be updated to make strategic communication part of the main body of a campaign plans (not just an afterthought in Annex Y) and to include specification of an information end state as part of commander's intent. Doctrine for staff organizations should designate a position like that currently held by public-affairs officers as a communication advisor. If that role is to be played by PAOs, then doctrine for public affairs needs to be revised to make clear their responsibilities as broad representatives of all communicating and signaling. Public affairs should be made more comfortable with this shift in roles by a corresponding shift in psychological operations/military information support operations, with a separation between truth-based and fallacious operations, and a firewall established within that discipline, separating off the black capabilities. Under such a construct, public-affairs personnel should have no trouble representing the interests of public affairs, of white MISO, and of other credible sources of messages and signals, leaving a minimal line open through the firewall for coordination and deconfliction with those generating misleading or misattributed messages.

Crawl before You Walk; Walk before You Run

Rome wasn't built in a day. There is no reason that a broad range of strategic-communication capabilities cannot be developed contemporaneously, but when forced to prioritize, crawl before you walk, and walk before you run. As described in chapter 6, focus first on being intentional and deconflicted in our own messaging and signaling. Then incorporate consideration of other participants in the information environment, consider cultural contexts, listen, and conduct true engagement. Finally, move to full integration of messages and signals, realize complex influence models, and seize the initiative from adversaries.

Whatever You Want to Call Strategic Communication, Don't Throw the Baby Out with the Bathwater!

At this point, you may still dislike the term "strategic communication," and you may think that my definition or my vision goes too far. I'm not married to the term "strategic communication" and you need not be either. I do, however, have a strong commitment to the notion that the United States should be thoughtful, purposive, and coordinated in efforts to inform, influence, and persuade foreign populations in pursuit of national policy objectives.

If strategic communication as a term is too vague, too contested, or becomes politically untenable, abandon it. Just do not allow the underlying effort to coordinate government impact on the information environment to be lost too.

Notes

1. Peter W. Chiarelli and Stephen M. Smith, "Learning from Our Modern Wars: The Imperatives of Preparing for a Dangerous Future," *Military Review*, September–October 2007.

2. Matthew C. Armstrong, "Operationalizing Public Diplomacy," in "Part 2: Public Diplomacy Applications," *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, eds., New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 63.

3. Kennon H. Nakamura and Matthew C. Weed, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Washington, D.C., December 18, 2009, p. 29.

4. Patricia H. Kushlis and Patricia Lee Sharpe, "Public Diplomacy Matters More than Ever," *Foreign Service Journal*, Vol. 83, No. 10, October 2006, p. 32.

5. Matt Armstrong, "Preparing to Lose the Information War?" Mountainrunner.us, internet blog, September 10, 2009. As of January 12, 2010: http://mountainrunner.us/2009/09/senate_approps.html.

6. The White House, *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., March 2010.

7. Eric V. Larson, Richard E. Darilek, Dalia Dassa Kaye, Forrest E. Morgan, Brian Nichiporuk, Diana Dunham-Scott, Cathryn Quantic Thurston, and Kristin J. Leuschner, *Understanding Commanders' Information Needs for Influence Operations*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MG-656-A, 2009, p. xv.

8. Andrew MacKay and Steve Tatham, *Behavioural Conflict: From General to Strategic Corporal: Complexity, Adaptation and Influence*, Defence Academy of The United Kingdom, The Shrivenham Papers, No. 9, December 2009, p. 9.

9. U.S. Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Functional Concept for Strategic Communication (SC)*, 2010, p. 3.

10. Christopher Paul, "Psychological Operations by Another Name Are Sweeter," *Small Wars Journal Blog*, July 29, 2010, http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/07/psychological-operations-by-an/.

APPENDIX I

Definitions of Strategic Communication

As discussed in chapter 2, there are many definitions of strategic communication offered by many different sources. This appendix lists all of those that have been captured by the author. They are presented in two sections: official definitions, coming from or contained within official government publications; and other definitions, offered by individual scholars, proponents, or government personnel. Each section is ordered alphabetically by author.

Official Definitions

The Department of Defense 2009 *Report on Strategic Communication*

Emergent thinking is coalescing around the notion that strategic communication should be viewed as a process rather than as a set of capabilities, organizations, or discrete activities. In its broadest sense, "strategic communication" is the process of integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into policy-making, planning, and operations at every level.[1]

The Department of Defense *Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept*, 2009

This concept proposes one possible approach to the conduct of strategic communication by joint forces. It defines strategic communication essentially as sharing meaning with others in support of national interest.[2]

AND

Strategic communication essentially means sharing meaning (i.e., communicating) in support of national objectives (i.e., strategically). This involves listening as much as transmitting. It applies not only to information, but also

to physical communication—that is, action that conveys meaning. While strategic communication is a national effort involving much more than military actions, this concept will concentrate on the joint force's contribution to this broader effort.[3]

Joint Publication 1–02, the Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*

Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.[4]

The 2006 *QDR Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication*

Definition. Strategic Communication has been defined as: "Focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power."[5]

Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, 2007

Public diplomacy and strategic communication should always strive to support our nation's fundamental values and national security objectives. All communication and public diplomacy activities should:

- Underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being;
- Reach out to those who share our ideals;
- Support those who struggle for freedom and democracy; and
- Counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression.[6]

The White House *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, 2010

Over the last few years, the term "strategic communication" has become increasingly popular. However, different uses of the term "strategic communication" have led to significant confusion. As a result, we believe it is necessary to begin this report by clarifying what we mean by strategic communication. By "strategic communication(s)" we refer to: (a) the synchronization of words

and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.[7]

Unofficial

The Army War College *Information Operations Primer*, 2009

At its most basic, SC is the orchestration of actions, images, and words to achieve desired effects. SC is the process of coordinating horizontally (across DoD and the US Government, as well as with international partners as appropriate) and vertically (up and down the chain of command) to:

close the "say-do gap";

consider information and communication as part of strategy, planning and policy development from the very beginning;

assess communication impacts of actions before taking actions; and

consider "soft power" capabilities equally with more traditional DoD kinetic capabilities when determining the optimum course of action.[8]

Dr. Steve Cambone, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence, 2006

[Strategic communication] is not the creation of policy, it is the process—specifically, the synchronization of disparate operations, activities and other efforts—to achieve the goals or objectives of National policy and strategy.[9]

The Defense Science Board *Task Force on Strategic Communication*, 2008

Strategic communication is an integrated process that includes the development, implementation, assessment, and evolution of public actions and messages in support of policies, interests, and long-term goals.[10]

AND

Strategic communication is a sustained and coherent set of activities that include:

understanding identities, attitudes, behaviors, and cultures; media trends and information flows; social and influence networks; political, social, economic, and religious motivations

advising policymakers, diplomats, and military commanders on the public opinion and communication implications of their strategic and policy choices—and on the best ways to communicate their strategies and policies.

engaging in a dialogue of ideas between people and institutions that support national interests and, wherever possible, common interests and shared values

influencing attitudes and behavior through communication strategies supported by a broad range of government and civil society activities.

measuring the impact of activities comprehensively and over time.[11]

Dr. Emily Goldman, Strategic Communication Advisor in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State, 2007

Part of the reason is that strategic communication is in fact many things. It is a tool and instrument of power to support our national goals. It is a means to influence attitudes and behavior. It is a process of listening, understanding, and engaging audiences. It is a process of coordinating messages across our government and with our allies, and of synchronizing and integrating information with other instruments of national power. Strategic communication is both words and deeds.[12]

Major Charles Gramaglia, "Strategic Communication: Distortion and White Noise," 2008

Strategic communication is the process to synchronize the actions and verbal communications of all departments and independent agencies of the executive branch, in order to make real the President's polices and achieve his desired ends.[13]

Jeffrey B. Jones, former Director for Strategic Communications and Information on the National Security Council, "Strategic Communication: A Mandate for the United States," 2005

The synchronized coordination of statecraft, public affairs, public diplomacy, military information operations, and other activities, reinforced by political, economic, military, and other actions, to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives.[14]

Professor Dennis Murphy, U.S. Army War College *Information Operations Primer*, 2009

Strategic Communication . . . is formally defined as "focused United States Government processes and efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable to advance national interests and objectives through the use of coordinated information, themes, plans, programs, and actions synchronized with other elements of national power." Parsing this rather bureaucratic definition to its essentials, strategic communication is the orchestration of actions, words and images to achieve cognitive effects in support of policy and military objectives. While the capabilities used to achieve those effects should be unconstrained, primary supporting capabilities of strategic communication at the national strategic

level are generally considered as Public Affairs (PA); military Information Operations (IO) and Public Diplomacy (PD).[15]

Professor Dennis Murphy, U.S. Army War College, *The Trouble with Strategic Communication(s),* 2008

The default definition of strategic communication in the minds of many has to do with media interaction, which further devolves to establishing effective talking points for the next press briefing. This is not only wrong, it is dangerous. It significantly limits the ability of the actual process of strategic communication (no "s") to synergistically support military operations. In that light it is important to examine what strategic communication is in order to better exploit its full capabilities.[16]

Christopher Paul, *Information Operations: Doctrine and Practice,* 2008

Strategic communication—Conceived broadly, strategic communication is coordinating everything about the government that communicates (from actual communications of any sort, to policies, to actions) in order to advance the interests of the nation.[17]

AND

In a nutshell, strategic communication is coordinating everything about the government that communicates (from actual communications of any sort, to policies, to actions) in order to advance the interests of the nation. This is a very broad concept, but one that fits well with the notion of a war of ideas in which everything about a given country contributes to the ideological impression it creates.[18]

Christopher Paul, *Strategic Communication,* 2011

I define strategic communication as coordinated actions, messages, images, and other forms of signaling or engagement intended to inform, influence, or persuade selected audiences in support of national objectives.

Lee Rowland and Steve Tatham, "Strategic Communication & Influence Operations: Do We Really Get 'It'?" 2010

- Strategic Communication: A paradigm that recognises that information & perception effect target audience behaviour and that activity must be calibrated against first, second and third order effects.
- Strategic Communications: The processes and sequencing of information for carefully targeted audiences
- Influence: The desired end result of Strategic Communication.[19]

Admiral James Stavridis, "Strategic Communication and National Security," 2007

Simply stated, 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. In addition to truthfulness and timeliness, the information must be delivered to the right audience in a precise way. This generalized approach can be applied to essentially any organization, to the Department of Defense (DOD) broadly, and specifically to the individual nine combatant commands of the United States.[20]

Commander Steve Tatham, *Strategic Communication: A Primer*, 2008

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 through those conduits to promote and sustain particular types of behaviour.[21]

U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication*, 2008

[Strategic Communication (SC)] generally is accepted as "Focused United States Government (USG) efforts to understand and engage key audiences in order to create, strengthen or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, and themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power." Further and more specifically, effective SC requires synchronization of crucial themes, messages, images, and activities with other nonlethal and lethal operations.[22]

Notes

1. Department of Defense, *Report on Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., December 2009, p. 1.

2. United States Department of Defense, *Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept*, Washington, D.C., Version 1.0, October 7, 2009, p. v.

3. United States Department of Defense, *Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept*, p. 2

4. Department of Defense, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington, D.C., Joint Publication 1–02, April 12, 2001 (as amended through April 2010), p. 448.

5. *QDR Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., 2006, p. 3.

6. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee, *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, June 2007, p. 2.

7. The White House, *National Framework for Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C., March 2010, p. 2.

8. Dennis M. Murphy, "Strategic Communication," in Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations & Center for Strategic Leadership, *Information Operations Primer*, Carlisle, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, November 2009, p. 29.

9. Quoted in Charles S. Gramaglia, "Strategic Communication: Distortion and White Noise," in Joint Information Operations Warfare Command, *IOSphere*, Winter 2008, p. 10.

10. Defense Science Board, *Task Force on Strategic Communication*, Washington, D.C.: Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, January 2008, p. 1.

11. Defense Science Board, *Task Force on Strategic Communication*, p. 11.

12. Emily Goldman, "Strategic Communication: A Tool for Asymmetric Warfare," *Small Wars Journal*, October 6, 2007.

13. Charles S. Gramaglia, "Strategic Communication: Distortion and White Noise," in Joint Information Operations Warfare Command, *IOSphere*, Winter 2008, p. 10.

14. Jeffrey B. Jones, "Strategic Communication: A Mandate for the United States," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 39, October 2005, p. 108.

15. Dennis M. Murphy, "Strategic Communication," p. 9.

16. Dennis M. Murphy, *The Trouble with Strategic Communication(s)*, Carlisle, Penn.: U.S. Army War College Center for Strategic Leadership, Vol. 2–08, January 2008, p. 1.

17. Christopher Paul, *Information Operations: Doctrine and Practice: A Reference Handbook*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008, p. 167.

18. Paul, *Information Operation*, p. 7.

19. Lee Rowland and Steve Tatham, "Strategic Communication & Influence Operations: Do We Really Get 'It'?" *Small Wars Journal*, August 3, 2010, p. 7.

20. James G. Stavridis, "Strategic Communication and National Security," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Vol. 46, 3rd Quarter, 2007, p. 4.

21. Commander Steven A. Thatham, The Defence Academy R&AB Papers No. 28, *Strategic Communication: A Primer*, 2008. Available to download at: http://www.da.mod.uk/colleges/arag/document-listings/special/08(28)ST.pdf/view.

22. U.S. Joint Forces Command, *Commander's Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy*, Suffolk, Va.: U.S. Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center, Version 3.0, June 24, 2010, p. xii.

APPENDIX II

Department of Defense Report on Strategic Communication, December 2009

Purpose of Report

Section 1055(b) of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Section 1055) provides that the Secretary of Defense shall report to the congressional defense committees on "the organizational structure within the Department of Defense for advising the Secretary on the direction and priorities for strategic communication activities, including an assessment of the option of establishing a board, composed of representatives from among the organizations within the Department responsible for strategic communications, public diplomacy, and public affairs, and including advisory members from the broader interagency community as appropriate, for purposes of (1) providing strategic direction for Department of Defense efforts related to strategic communications and public diplomacy; and (2) setting priorities for the Department of Defense in the areas of strategic communications and public diplomacy." This report addresses these matters.

This report describes how DoD understands strategic communication, offers DoD views on the appropriate DoD role in strategic communication and public diplomacy, explains existing DoD processes and organizations that support effective strategic communication, and describes some potential future avenues for improvement and change (including an assessment of the option of establishing a strategic communication board within DoD).

Defining Strategic Communication for DoD

The DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (Joint Publication 1-02) defines the phrase "strategic communication" for the Department as "Focused United States Government efforts to understand and engage key audiences to

create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of United States Government interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power." However, this recitation of a dictionary definition does not explain how this term is interpreted and implemented.

Emergent thinking is coalescing around the notion that strategic communication should be viewed as a process, rather than as a set of capabilities, organizations, or discrete activities. In its broadest sense, "strategic communication" is the process of integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into policy-making, planning, and operations at every level. As the Joint Staff's October 2009 Joint Integrating Concept for Strategic Communication (SC TIC) puts it, "Strategic communication is the alignment of multiple lines of operation (e.g., policy implementation, public affairs, force movement, information operations, etc.) that together generate effects to support national objectives. Strategic communication essentially means sharing meaning (i.e., communicating) in support of national objectives (i.e., strategically). This involves listening as much as transmitting, and applies not only to information, but also [to] physical communication—action that conveys meaning."

Other important DoD documents also recognize the importance of strategic communication. The January 2009 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report noted the need for DoD strategic communication processes to "improve the alignment of actions and information with policy objectives" and "integrate strategic communication into defense missions and to support larger U.S. policies as well as the State Department's public diplomacy priorities." Similarly, Joint Publication (JP) 5–0, Joint Operation Planning, explains that strategic communication (SC) is "a natural extension of strategic direction, and supports the President's strategic guidance, the Secretary of Defense's National Defense Strategy, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs National Military Strategy . . . This is an interagency effort, which provides an opportunity to advance US regional and global partnerships."

The strategic communication process is designed to synchronize—and thus maximize the impact of efforts to achieve one or more of the following, depending on the circumstances:

- Improve U.S. credibility and legitimacy;
- Weaken an adversary's credibility and legitimacy;
- Convince selected audiences to take specific actions that support U.S. or international objectives;
- Cause a competitor or adversary to take (or refrain from taking) specific actions.

Effective strategic communication requires active listening and sustained engagement with relevant stakeholders; given this, some in DoD are increasingly using the term "strategic engagement and communication" instead of the term "strategic communication," as the latter term is often misinterpreted to imply a narrower concern with media, messaging, and traditional "communications" activities. Several other Departments and Agencies, as well as the National Security Staff(NSS), are also beginning to use the term "engagement" in lieu of or to supplement the term "strategic communication." In May, the NSS established a Global Engagement Directorate, with strategic communication nested within it. Similarly, the State Department coordinates strategic communication with interagency partners through its Global Strategic Engagement Center; and the National Counterterrorism Center nests strategic communication within its Global Engagement Group. Although internal DoD discussions about the most useful terminology are ongoing, this report will continue to use the phrase "strategic communication."

The strategic communication process involves both horizontal coordination (across DoD and the U.S. Government, as well as with international partners when appropriate) and vertical coordination (up and down the chain of command). In all cases, such coordination is designed to ensure that:

- Cultural, informational, and communication considerations are part of strategy, planning, and policy development from the very beginning (rather than as afterthoughts);
- The potential communication impacts of both kinetic and non-kinetic actions—their likely "perception effects"—are assessed and planned for before the actions are taken;
- Our words and our actions are consistent and mutually reinforcing (closing the "say-do" gap); and
- "Soft power" options and capabilities are given equal priority and considered in coordination with hard power alternatives.

It is difficult for large organizations to ensure effective strategic communication consistently at every level. But the difficulty of the challenge merely increases the need to focus attention on its importance. Although many challenges remain, DoD has, in recent years, made significant progress in focusing attention and resources on improving strategic communication, in part through effective coordination, integration and deconfliction of key supporting capabilities and activities.

Although SC is neither a capability nor a specific military specialty, some capabilities, functions, and activities are key enablers and amplifiers of effective strategic communication. As DoD's conception of SC has evolved, emphasis on strictly "informational" activities has decreased. DoD is shifting to viewing strategic communication as an adaptive, decentralized process of

trying to understand selected audiences thoroughly, hypothesizing physical or informational signals that will have the desired cognitive effect on those audiences, testing those hypotheses through action, monitoring the actual result through feedback, and disseminating the best solutions quickly through the Department and the joint force. DoD thus now recognizes the importance to strategic communication of ensuring effective coordination among a much larger group of capabilities, functions, and activities.

These include, but are not limited to, civil-military operations, military-to-military engagement, and many DoD activities that fall within "Security, Stability, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations" (SSTRO). That list is necessarily incomplete, however, as all DoD activities have a communication and informational impact. The Strategic Communication Joint Integrating Concept, while not formal DoD guidance, usefully highlights eleven supporting capabilities that DoD should consider critical to the strategic communication process in the future:

1. The ability to integrate all joint force actions to maximize desired effects on selected audiences.
2. The ability to coordinate joint force actions with the efforts of other agencies and partners within the context of a broader national strategy.
3. The ability to access, produce, and maintain information and knowledge on the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of potential audiences.
4. The ability to access, produce, and maintain information and knowledge on complex social communication systems, including the characteristics of various media channels and the intentions, capabilities, and efforts of other influencers within and having an effect on the joint operations area.
5. The ability to detect, monitor, translate, and assess the effects of the strategic communication efforts of others—including friendly governments, non-state groups, neutrals, competitors, and adversaries—as the basis for responding to those effects.
6. The ability to estimate the direct and indirect effects of potential actions and signals on the perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and actions of selected audiences, both intended and unintended.
7. The ability to conceive and formulate timely and culturally attuned messages.
8. The ability quickly to produce and deliver information designed to influence selected audiences as desired.
9. The ability to conceive and coordinate physical actions or maintain physical capabilities designed to influence selected audiences as desired.
10. The ability to document, through various means, joint force actions, down to small-unit levels, and to disseminate this information in real or near-real time as required.
11. The ability to coordinate, monitor, measure, and assess the effects of friendly signals with other partners on intended and unintended audiences in relation to expected effects.

DoD is currently conducting a Strategic Communication Capabilities-Based Assessment to determine the degree to which existing capabilities are sufficient or need to be enhanced and to identify best practices for strategic communication at the Combatant Command level. As noted above, however, the Department does not view these or other supporting capabilities as discrete, specific "strategic communication capabilities" or activities; these are capabilities that are already resident in existing DoD components and processes, but may need further leveraging or more robust resourcing in the future to support the strategic communication process most effectively.

Department of Defense Role in Strategic Communication

The strategic communication process should be engaged in by all USG actors at all levels, from the operational level of war to the highest interagency levels. DoD's responsibilities and operational missions give DoD a unique role to play, ensuring that the Department's strategic communication processes support major military operations, shape the environment to prevent conflict, and if conflict occurs, ensure it occurs on terms favorable to the realization of U.S. national security interests.

DoD does not engage directly in public diplomacy, which is the purview of the State Department, but numerous DoD activities are designed specifically to support the State Department's public diplomacy efforts and objectives, which in turn support national objectives. DoD refers to these activities as "Defense Support to Public Diplomacy" (DSPD). Many of these DSPD activities are initiated via direct request to DoD or a Geographic Combatant Command from a U.S. Embassy, from the applicable regional bureau in the State Department, or from the Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. Some DSPD activities are initiated by DoD or Geographic Combatant Command recommendation to the State Department.

DSPD activities range from hospital ship visits and community service activities performed by military personnel, to the provision of Military Information Support Teams (MISTs) to embassies upon the request of the Ambassador, to DoD logistical or transportation support for State Department public diplomacy activities. In all cases, DSPD activities are coordinated with the State Department: either at the country team level or at the Washington interagency level.

Virtually all of DoD's efforts and activities overseas have direct or indirect diplomatic impacts, even when not specifically designed as DSPD activities. A Navy ship stopping in a foreign port—and the interactions of U.S. sailors with local populations, for instance—can have a significant impact on how Americans and U.S. policy are perceived by the host population, as can kinetic actions. The Department is keenly aware that all its activities have

public diplomacy effects, and Pentagon and Combatant Command staffs coordinate continually with the State Department and U.S. embassies around the world to ensure that DoD and State Department activities and efforts are integrated, mutually supportive, and further national objectives.

In some areas, DoD and State Department roles and responsibilities can overlap. For instance, some DoD informational activities and key leader engagements closely resemble State Department public diplomacy efforts. At times, this overlap is useful and does not lead to problems; at other times, it is appropriate for one agency to have a lead or exclusive role. Thus, during combat operations or in other non-permissive environments, DoD often takes the lead out of necessity, as civilian actors may be unable to perform their usual activities. DoD, the State Department and the National Security Staff (NSS) are currently reviewing roles and responsibilities for informational activities among departments and agencies.

Department of Defense Strategic Communication Process

From a DoD perspective, "strategic communication priorities" are not separate and distinct from national or Department policy objectives. DoD's strategic communication process is designed to support USG and DoD policy goals; thus, the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and DoD Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF) provide the overarching policy objectives and planning guidance for DoD during the SC process. Each Geographic Combatant Commander uses these documents, as well as additional policy guidance from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, to develop Theater Campaign Plans (TCPs) that describe how the Combatant Commander intends to conduct operations and activities —including shaping and influence programs—in theater in support of national and DoD objectives.

The Secretary of Defense is informed through each of his principal staff assistants, and DoD does not view "strategic communication" as something that can be meaningfully presented separately from discussion of an overall strategy and the process designed to implement that strategy. A key lesson from previous DoD efforts to conceptualize and organize for effective strategic communication is that processes intended to develop separate and distinct strategic communication priorities, plans, or organizations are ineffective when divorced from other planning processes. Strategic communication must instead be integrated into existing and time-tested policy-making and planning processes, and the SC process should not displace or alter the roles and responsibilities of existing DoD components.

Although virtually every DoD office has a role in the strategic communication process, certain offices are the key drivers and leaders of the process,

due to their roles and responsibilities in policy formulation, planning, public communication, and the information environment. These key offices are described below.

Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P))

The USD(P) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all matters on the formulation of national security and defense policy, and the integration and oversight of DoD policy and plans to achieve national security objectives. As such, the USD(P) is responsible for ensuring that issues of stakeholder perception and response have been integrated into policy decisions, and that the strategic communication process is integrated into DoD long-term policy planning via documents such as the GEF. USD(P) also provides final OSD approval of Combatant Command contingency plans.

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) is organized both regionally and functionally to develop regional-, country-, and issue-specific policy guidance.

From 2007 until 2009, OUSD(P) had a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Support to Public Diplomacy. Experience proved, however, that a DASD-level office was not an effective means for ensuring high-level attention to improving policy-driven strategic communication, and in March 2009 that office was disestablished. Recognizing that effective strategic communication requires high-level advice and coordination, USD(P) appointed a senior advisor with responsibility for global strategic engagement within the OUSD(P) front office in April 2009, and shortly thereafter established the OUSD(P) Global Strategic Engagement Team (GSET). This team reports directly to USD(P) and is tasked with facilitating the strategic communication process within OUSD(P) and liaising with other DoD components as appropriate. The GSET co-chairs the DoD-wide Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee (GESCC).

Primary responsibility for Defense Support for Public Diplomacy was placed with the appropriate regional and functional offices within Policy, and the OUSD(P) DASD for Plans was given the primary responsibility for strategic communication as it applies to Global Force Posture and plans directed by the GEF. The DASD for Plans coordinates closely with the OUSD(P) GSET.

Within OUSD(P), the Assistant Secretary for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD(SO/LIC&IC)) serves as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense on Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict matters. The ASD (SO/LIC&IC) exercises policy oversight for PSYOP activities within the

DoD, including Military Information Support Teams. ASD (SO/LIC&IC) is responsible for development, coordination and oversight of the implementation of policy and plans for DoD participation in all USG combating terrorism activities, including programs designed to counter violent extremism. The ASD (SO/LIC&IC) coordinates closely with the OUSD(P) GSET.

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD(PA))

The ASD(PA) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all communications activities including, but not exclusively, DoD news media relations, public liaison, and public affairs. ASD(PA) conducts short-, mid-, and long-term communication planning in support of policy objectives. These plans are coordinated extensively across the Department, and with interagency partners as applicable. ASD(PA) also coordinates media engagement and prepares speeches and talking points for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and OSD principals, provides media and audience analysis for use by DoD components, and approves public affairs guidance for the Combatant Commands and other DoD components. As such, the ASD(PA) is a participant in the strategic communication process and works closely with other DoD components to ensure that the strategic communication process is integrated into DoD long-term planning.

Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence (USD(I))

The USD(I) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for Information Operations (IO). DoD Directive 3600.01 defines Information Operations as "the integrated employment of the core capabilities of Electronic Warfare (EW), Computer Network Operations (CNO), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Military Deception (MILDEC), and Operations Security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own." The USD(I) exercises authority for oversight of IO in coordination with the USD(P) and other OSD offices. OUSD(I) also works with the Military Departments to develop an Information Operations Career Force. Information operations personnel are key participants in the strategic communication process at Combatant Commands and across the Department.

Information Operations are always coordinated with other information activities within the Department. DoD submitted to Congress an interim report on information operations focusing on influence activities in September 2009, and will submit a follow-up report by January 26, 2010

(as directed by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal year 2010 Conference Report).

Joint Staff

The Joint Staff contributes to the strategic communication process at many levels. The J3 (Current Operations) Directorate provides IO and PSYOP expertise and advice to DoD leadership to achieve national, strategic, and theater military objectives. The J-5 (Plans and Policy) Directorate, in conjunction with the Combatant Commands and Military Departments, develops policy guidance, plans, and strategic narratives for senior leadership, based upon policy guidance and directives from OSD. The J-5 also acts as the Joint Staff representative in the interagency strategic communication process to ensure that policy objectives are planned, coordinated, and integrated appropriately. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Public Affairs Office (CJCS PAO) works with OSD(PA) to ensure that broad policy guidance is effectively communicated by the military to public audiences appropriate messages and talking points. Most importantly, with regard to the strategic communication process, the Joint Staff provides planning guidance to the Combatant Commands in the form of planning orders. The Joint Staff also reviews and staffs all Combatant Command operations and contingency plans.

Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee (GESCC)

Although DoD believes that strategic communication should be inherent in all policy making, operational planning, and execution, the Department also recognizes that effective processes require appropriate coordination mechanisms, including designated individuals tasked with facilitating the strategic communication process. Accordingly, a number of DoD components have designated staff sections as having the responsibility to assist senior leaders in ensuring that the key orchestrating and synchronizing aspects of the SC process are carried out effectively. A critical lesson from past DoD efforts to organize for effective strategic communication, however, is that the strategic communication process works best when strategic communication coordinating mechanisms are designed to leverage and improve, rather than duplicate or replace, the capabilities residing in existing DoD components.

In June 2009, OUSD(P) and OASD(PA)re-missioned an informal DoD information-sharing body previously known as the Information Coordinating Committee, expanding its membership and renaming it the Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee (GESCC). The GESCC is evolving into the central body for facilitating the strategic communication integrating process within the Department. The GESCC meets on a biweekly basis to

identify emerging issues, exchanges information on key actions being worked across the staffs (including strategic communication studies, reports and long-term planning documents), and facilitates the proper integration and deconfliction of DoD activities.

The GESCC is co-chaired by OUSD(P) and OASD(PA), and brings together all of the key DoD offices mentioned above (OUSD(P), OASD(PA), OUSD(I), Joint Staff). Other regular GESCC attendees include representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics. Other DoD offices, including Combatant Command representatives, are invited to participate in GESCC meetings as appropriate, as are representatives of other USG agencies, such as the State Department, Open Source Center, the National Security Staff, and the National Counterterrorism Center. GESCC representatives participate in the NSC's regular interagency policy committee meetings on strategic communication and global engagement, and also work closely with the State Department's Global Strategic Engagement Center.

Way Forward

It is extremely difficult for an organization as large and complex as DoD to integrate fully matters of stakeholder and audience perception and response into policy-making, planning, and operations at every level, and to ensure that actions, words, and images are consistently synchronized and deconflicted. The strategic communication process is always a work in progress, one that is inherently aspirational in its goals. Nonetheless, it is a critical process, one that DoD is committed to improving.

Recent DoD initiatives have already significantly improved the strategic communication process. After struggling to define strategic communication and develop effective coordination processes for much of the past decade, there is now substantial consensus within the Department about the value of viewing strategic communication fundamentally as a process, rather than a collection of capabilities and activities. Conceptualizing strategic communication as a process has allowed the Department to focus on ensuring effective coordination among DoD components, and to identify needed supporting capabilities, instead of designing and resourcing elaborate new structures and organizations.

Assessment of the Option of Establishing a Board

The Department examined the proposal to establish a new "board, composed of representatives from among the organizations within the Department

responsible for strategic communications, public diplomacy, and public affairs, and including advisory members from the broader interagency community as appropriate, for purposes of (1) providing strategic direction for Department of Defense efforts related to strategic communications and public diplomacy; and (2) setting priorities for the Department of Defense in the areas of strategic communications and public diplomacy."

The GESCC, described above, functions effectively as a coordinating board that facilitates the strategic communication integrating process, both within DoD and *vis à vis* interagency actors. Although relatively young, the GESCC has so far proven a successful mechanism for identifying emerging issues, exchanging information on resources, best practices, and key actions being worked across the staffs, and ensuring proper integration and deconfliction of DoD activities. The GESCC is actively engaged in several pending studies and reports designed to identify ways to improve DoD's strategic communication process, including the Strategic Communication Capabilities-Based Assessment, the SC Joint Integrating Concept, and a number of studies and reports relating to information operations.

Strategic communication priorities are viewed by DoD as directly related to broader USG national security priorities, and, as noted previously, the Department has no single organization "responsible for strategic communications;" rather, we view several DoD components as playing key roles in leading the strategic communication process. The GESCC performs this function of acting as a broker to provide consolidated advice to the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy on "priorities for the department in . . . strategic communications and public diplomacy."

Despite these promising recent initiatives, significant challenges remain in ensuring an effective DoD-wide strategic communication process. These challenges include:

- Ensuring that DoD personnel at every level understand the concept and principles of strategic communication;
- Fully institutionalizing this understanding of strategic communication into doctrine and training, and ensuring its centrality to DoD policy development, planning, and implementation;
- Ensuring that the strategic communication process is supported by appropriate advisors and coordinating mechanisms at the Combatant Command, Military Department, and component levels, as well as at the Department level;
- Ensuring, simultaneously, that such essential coordination mechanisms leverage existing organizations and capabilities to minimize bureaucratic layers and competition for limited DoD staff and resources; and
- Ensuring that adequate mechanisms exist to collect, analyze, disseminate, and share information on key stakeholders and target audiences and the effects of US. Government activities on their perceptions and actions.

Conclusion

In this ever more complex and interdependent world, the strategic communication process is increasingly vital for DoD. Without a nuanced understanding of stakeholders and audiences, DoD policy-makers, planners, and field personnel cannot effectively evaluate the likely effects of DoD actions, words, and images. And unless those "perception effects" are taken into account, DoD components cannot effectively develop or implement policy or come up with effective engagement plans., communication plans, or risk mitigation strategies.

Integrating issues of audience and stakeholder perception into policy-making, planning, and operations at every level is difficult, as is the effective orchestration of actions, images, and words. Over the past few years, DoD has experimented with a range of mechanisms for ensuring effective strategic communication, and this will continue to be a work in progress. DoD will continually review and revise procedures, doctrine, guidance, and coordinating mechanisms to ensure that the strategic communication process effectively supports national and DoD objectives.

APPENDIX III

White House National Framework for Strategic Communication, March 2010

Purpose of Report

The Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 requires the President to submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on a comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication.

Executive Summary

Across all of our efforts, effective strategic communications are essential to sustaining global legitimacy and supporting our policy aims. Aligning our actions with our words is a shared responsibility that must be fostered by a culture of communication throughout the government. We must also be more effective in our deliberate communication and engagement, and do a better job understanding the attitudes, opinions, grievances, and concerns of peoples—not just elites—around the world. Doing so is critical to allow us to convey credible, consistent messages, develop effective plans and to better understand how our actions will be perceived.

Our study has revealed the need to clarify what strategic communication means and how we guide and coordinate our communications efforts. In this report, we describe "strategic communication" as the synchronization of our words and deeds as well as deliberate efforts to communicate and engage with intended audiences. We also explain the positions, processes, and interagency working groups we have created to improve our ability to better synchronize words and deeds, and better coordinate communications and engagement programs and activities. These changes are already producing visible results; however, we still have much ground to cover.

We recognize the need to ensure an appropriate balance between civilian and military efforts. As a result, a process has been initiated to review existing programs and resources to identify current military programs that might be better executed by other Departments and Agencies. This process includes an interagency working group tasked to develop short-, medium-, and long-term options for addressing issues pertaining to budgets, personnel, and future programs and activities.

Defining Strategic Communication

Over the last few years, the term "strategic communication" has become increasingly popular. However, different uses of the term "strategic communication" have led to significant confusion. As a result, we believe it is necessary to begin this report by clarifying what we mean by strategic communication. By "strategic communication(s)" we refer to: (a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.

- *Synchronization*. Coordinating words and deeds, including the active consideration of how our actions and policies will be interpreted by public audiences as an organic part of decision-making, is an important task. This understanding of strategic communication is driven by a recognition that what we do is often more important than what we say because actions have communicative value and send messages. Achieving strategic communication, in this sense, is a shared responsibility. It requires fostering a culture of communication that values this type of synchronization and encourages decision-makers to take the communicative value of actions into account during their decision-making. The most senior levels of government must advocate and implement a culture of communication that is reinforced through mechanisms and processes.
- *Deliberate Communication and Engagement*. The United States Government has a wide range of programs and activities deliberately focused on understanding, engaging, informing, influencing, and communicating with people through public affairs, public diplomacy, information operations and other efforts.

To be clear, we are not creating or advocating for the creation of new terms, concepts, organizations, or capabilities. We are, for the purposes of this report, clarifying different aspects of strategic communication. In short, we have taken steps to reinforce the importance of synchronizing words and deeds while simultaneously establishing coordination mechanisms and processes to improve the United States Government's ability to deliberately communicate and engage with intended audiences. The steps we have taken

have already borne fruit, but both of these tasks are complex and we acknowledge that more remains to be done.

Strategy for Synchronization

Synchronizing deeds and words to advance United States Government interests, policies, and objectives is an important part of effective strategic communication and strategy more generally. In the past, the burden for synchronizing words and deeds has often been placed on the shoulders of the communications community, which only controls and executes a subset of the capabilities and activities that need to be synchronized. A key lesson we have learned is that actions well beyond those managed by the communications community have communicative value and impact.

Every action that the United States Government takes sends a message. Synchronization is therefore a shared responsibility that begins with senior leaders and specifically Department-level leadership. They must foster a "culture of communication" that recognizes and incentivizes the importance of identifying, evaluating, and coordinating the communicative value of actions as a proactive and organic part of planning and decision-making at all levels. The communications community supports senior leaders by leading the development of mechanisms and processes that enable and sustain synchronization. These mechanisms include processes designed to: ensure strategic goals and messages are well understood at all levels; raise awareness about the communicative impact of decisions and actions; emphasize the importance of considering such impacts proactively; and ensure that forums exist for deliberating these impacts on high-priority issues and coordinating actions with deliberate communication and engagement.

Strategy for Deliberate Communication and Engagement

Deliberate communication and engagement with intended audiences is an important part of the United States Government's ability to meet its national security goals and objectives. Programs and activities focused on communicating and engaging with the public need to be strategic and long-term, not just reactive and tactical. They should also focus on articulating what the United States is for, not just what we are against. For example, our efforts to communicate and engage with Muslim communities around the world must be defined primarily by a focus on mutual respect and mutual interest, even as we continue to counter violent extremism by focusing on discrediting and delegitimizing violent extremist networks and ideology.

Deliberate communication also helps establish the strategic messages against which our actions are often judged by the public, and deliberate engagement helps identify how our actions are being interpreted and perceived. It is vital that the United States is not focused solely on one-way communication, which is why we have consciously emphasized the importance of "engagement"—connecting with, listening to, and building long-term relationships with key stakeholders.

The communications community is comprised of a wide variety of organizations and capabilities including, but not limited to: public affairs (PA), public diplomacy (PD), military information operations (IO), and defense support to public diplomacy (DSPD). Planning, development, and execution of engagement programs and activities need to be better coordinated, integrated, and driven by research, information, and intelligence. Steps are being taken to do this, including by specifying roles and responsibilities within departments and across the interagency, piloting an interagency planning process for key policy priorities, and strengthening the coordination of and improving access to relevant, research, information, and intelligence.

Interagency Planning and Coordination

Strategic Planning

Across the United States Government, there are a variety of perspectives, models, and approaches used in strategic planning. Over the past year, the interagency communications community has been piloting an intuitive planning process for national-level priorities that attempts to bridge the individual processes of departments and agencies and allows both traditional and nontraditional partners to voluntarily bring their respective capabilities to affect common objectives. This process will be utilized for planning communication and engagement regarding strategic policy priorities. We will continue to monitor, evaluate, and adjust this planning process as necessary.

National-level Interagency Coordination

Interagency Policy Committees (IPCs) led by the NBS coordinate the development and implementation of national security policies by multiple agencies of the United States Government. The Strategic Communication IPC is the main forum for interagency deliberation and coordination of national security policy relating to strategic communications issues. The Strategic Communication IPC also provides policy analysis for consideration by more senior committees of the NSC/HSC system and ensures timely responses to decisions made by the President. The Strategic Communication IPC forms Sub-IPCs as required.

Operational-level Interagency Coordination

The Country Team and the Joint Interagency Coordination Group are the two standing interagency coordination bodies at the operational level. One holds operational responsibility, while the second serves to advise planning efforts.

- The Country Team, headed by the chief of the U.S. diplomatic mission, is the United States Government's senior coordinating and supervising body in-country. Achieving strategic communication, including through synchronization of words and deeds, as well as the effective execution of deliberate communication and engagement, is the responsibility of the Chief of Mission.
- Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG), established at each Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) headquarters, coordinate with United States Government civilian agencies to conduct operational planning. JIACGs support day-to-day planning at the GCC headquarters, and advise planners regarding civilian agency operations, capabilities, and limitations. While the JIACG has no operational authority, it does provide perspective in the coordinated use of national power and can serve as a referral resource for military planners seeking information and input from communication practitioners in theater or at the national-level.

Information, Intelligence, Research and Analysis Support to Deliberate Communication and Engagement

Information, intelligence, research, and analysis are key enablers for policy development and strategic planning. Various agencies and offices across the United States Government support efforts to communicate and engage with publics by conducting research and analysis on foreign public opinion, key audiences, the most effective mechanisms for communicating with and engaging them, and violent extremist communications and messages when appropriate. However, these efforts should be better coordinated and easier to access, especially in the field. The United States Government's efforts to communicate and engage with foreign publics should be shaped by information, research, and analysis about key audiences.

Priorities for Strategic Communication

Although the United States Government carries out deliberate communication and engagement worldwide, the priorities for our communication and engagement efforts are the same as overall national security priorities. Communication and engagement, like all other elements of national power, should be designed to support policy goals as well as to achieve specific effects to include:

- Foreign audiences recognize areas of mutual interest with the United States
- Foreign audiences believe the United States plays a constructive role in global affairs; and

- Foreign audiences see the United States as a respectful partner in efforts to meet complex global challenges.

Our communication and engagement with foreign audiences should emphasize mutual respect and mutual interest. The United States should articulate a positive vision, identifying what we are for, whenever possible, and engage foreign audiences on positive terms. At the same time, our countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts should focus more directly on discrediting, denigrating, and delegitimizing al-Qa'ida and violent extremist ideology.

Resources

It is essential that we balance and optimize investment across the communications community. Resource decisions and applications must be shaped by national priorities and be consistent with existing roles and missions and the capacity of each stakeholder to effectively execute validated tasks and programs. Accountability, assessment, and reporting are critical aspects of our newly established planning process to ensure all major deliberate communication and engagement efforts are coordinated and effective.

We are aware of concerns that the resources for our efforts need to be "re-balanced" according to established roles and responsibilities. An interagency working group has been formed to evaluate military communication and engagement programs, activities, and investments to identify those that may be more appropriately funded or implemented by civilian departments and agencies, especially outside theaters of conflict. This review will be framed by four inter-related elements key to the success of "re-balancing" our programs: (a) how best to allocate financial resources; (b) how quickly to streamline or eliminate programs to reduce unnecessary duplication; (c) how to ensure we preserve important military communication and engagement capacities; and, (d) how best to expedite revitalizing and strengthening civilian department and agency capabilities, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to enable them to effectively execute these programs and activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

National Security Staff

The Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications (DNSA/SC) serves as the National Security Advisor's principal advisor for strategic communications. The Senior Director for Global Engagement (SDGE) is the principal deputy to the DNSA/SC. Together, they are responsible for ensuring that (a) the message-value and communicative impact of actions are considered during decision-making by the National Security

Council and Homeland Security Council, (b) the mechanisms to promote strategic communication are in place within the National Security Staff (NSS), and (c) similar mechanisms are developed across the interagency. The DNSA/SC and SDGE are also responsible for guiding and coordinating interagency deliberate communication and engagement efforts, and execute this responsibility through the NSS Directorate for Global Engagement (NSS/GE) and through the Interagency Policy Committee (IPCs) on Strategic Communication, which they chair.

Department of State

The Department of State carries out Public Diplomacy as an essential part of foreign policy. Public Diplomacy (PD) within the State Department is led by the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R). The Department of State distinguishes between Public Affairs, which includes outreach to domestic publics, and Public Diplomacy (PD), which seeks to promote the national interest of the United States through understanding, engaging, informing, and influencing foreign publics, and by promoting mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people from other nations around the world.

- The Office of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs engages functional and regional bureaus within the Department of State to ensure coordination and integration between policy, communication, and engagement objectives.
- The Under Secretary's Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R/PPR) provides long-term strategic planning and performance measurement capability for public diplomacy and public affairs programs. The under Secretary's Policy Planning Staff oversees implementation of the Department's global strategic plan for public diplomacy and devises plans for discrete events such as Presidential speeches and initiatives and long-term engagement on such areas as climate change, non-proliferation, and global health issues. To achieve these objectives, R/PPR ensures coordination among global PD resources, including the Bureaus of International Information Programs (IIP), Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), and Public Affairs (PA), and Public Affairs Officers at overseas missions.
- The Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC) supports interagency efforts on global engagement and strategic communication. GSEC represents the State Department in the coordination of communications and engagement planning and activities by contributing to the discussions in, disseminating the decisions of, and executing projects as requested by the IPCs for Global Engagement and Strategic Communication. GSEC promulgates interagency decisions and objectives to relevant bureaus and offices in the Department of State and connects decision-makers with government-wide expertise on strategic communication.

- The public Diplomacy Office Director (PDOD) is the senior U.S.-based PD official in each geographic regional bureau and the International Organizations bureau of the Department of State. PDODs are responsible for integrating communication into decision-making and helping to ensure policies and plans developed at the bureau-level are coordinated with deliberate messaging and engagement programs and activities. PDODs manage and supervise the operations of their respective bureau's PD office. They work closely with Public Affairs Officers overseas, the regional bureau leadership, other bureaus, and the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to develop PD strategies for their regions and formulate and implement PD initiatives. In conjunction with their bureau Front Office and Executive Office, PDODs propose and manage regional PD budgets and the assignments process for staffing PD positions in the bureaus and the field. The PDOD reports to the bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary designated to oversee PD and PA.

Department of Defense

The Department of Defense (DOD) is a key contributor to our communication and engagement efforts. The key elements of DOD involved include, but are not limited to: information operations (IO), defense support to public diplomacy (DSPD), public affairs (PA), and civil affairs (CA)—all working together to accomplish military objectives that support national objectives.

- The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for all matters on the formulation of national security and defense policy, and the integration and oversight of DOD policy and plans to achieve national security objectives.
- The Senior Advisor to the USD(P) advises the USD(P) on strategic communication and heads the OUSD(P) Global Strategic Engagement Team (GSET). This team is tasked with facilitating the strategic communication process within OUSD(P) and liaising with other DOD components as appropriate.
- Primary responsibility for Defense Support for Public Diplomacy is placed with the appropriate regional and functional offices within OUSD(P).
- OUSD(P) DASD for Plans has the primary responsibility, in close coordination with OUSD (P) GSET and OASD (PA) for ensuring that guidance for strategic communication is included in strategic planning guidance documents, such as the GEF and Global Force Posture, and for reviewing Combatant Command plans directed by the GEF to ensure strategic communication considerations have been integrated in the plans.
- Within OUSD (P), the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD (SO/LIC&IC)) serves as the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense on Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict matters. The ASD (SO/LIC&IC) exercises policy oversight for Psychological Operations (PSYOP) activities within the DoD,

including Military Information Support Teams. ASD (SO/LIC&IC) is responsible for development, coordination, and oversight of the implementation of policy and plans for DoD participation in all United States Government combating terrorism activities, including programs designed to counter violent extremism. The ASD (SO/LIC&IC) coordinates closely with the OUSD(P) GSET.

- The USD(I) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for Information Operations (IO). DOD Directive 3600.01 defines Information Operations as "the integrated employment of the core capabilities of Electronic Warfare (EW), Computer Network Operations (CNO), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Military Deception (MILDEC), and Operations Security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own." The USD(I) exercises authority for oversight of IO in coordination with the USD(P) and other OSD offices. OUSD(I) also works with the Military Departments to develop an Information Operations Career Force. Information operations personnel are key participants in the strategic communication process at Combatant Commands and across the Department.
- The ASD(PA) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the Secretary of Defense for communications activities including, but not exclusively, DOD news media relations, public liaison, and public affairs. ASD(PA) conducts short-, mid-, and long-term communication planning in support of policy objectives. These plans are coordinated extensively across the Department, and with interagency partners as applicable. ASD(PA) also coordinates media engagement and prepares speeches and talking points for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and OSD principals, provides media and audience analysis for use by DOD components, and approves public affairs guidance for the Combatant Commands and other DOD components.
- The Joint Staff contributes to the communications enterprise at many levels. The Current Operations Directorate (J-3) provides Information Operations (IO)/ Psychological Operations (PSYOP) expertise and advice to leadership to achieve national, strategic, and theater military objectives. The Plans and Policy Directorate (J-5), in conjunction with the Combatant Commands and Services, develops policy guidance, strategic plans, and enduring communications themes and narratives for senior leadership, based upon policy guidance and directives from OSD. The J-5 also serves as the Joint Staff representative in the interagency process.
- The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Public Affairs Office (CJCS PAO) is the principal staff assistant and advisor to the CJCS for news media relations, public liaison, and public affairs.
- DOD's Global Engagement Strategy Coordination Committee (GESCC), created in June 2009, is evolving into the central body for facilitating the strategic communication integrating process within the Department. The GESCC meets on a biweekly basis to identify emerging issues, exchanges information on key actions being worked across the staffs (including strategic communication studies, reports and long-term planning documents), and facilitates the proper integration and deconfliction of DOD activities. The GESCC is co-chaired by OUSD(P) and OASD(PA), and brings together all of the key DoD offices mentioned above

(OUSD(P), OASD(PA), OUSD(I), Joint Staff). Other regular GESCC attendees include representatives from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology & Logistics. Other DOD offices, including Combatant Command representatives, are invited to participate in GESCC meetings and GESCC representatives and also work closely with the Department of State's Global Strategic Engagement Center.

Broadcasting Board of Governors

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) is responsible for nonmilitary, international broadcasting sponsored by the United States Government, including the Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), Radio and TV Martí, and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN)—Radio Sawa and Alhurra Television. BBG broadcasters distribute programming in 60 languages to an estimated weekly audience of 175 million people via radio, TV, the Internet and other new media. The BBG works to serve as an example of a free and professional press, reaching a worldwide audience with news, information and relevant discussions. An independent federal agency, the BBG is headed by a nine-person bipartisan board that serves as a firewall against political interference in the journalistic product. The Secretary of State delegates her ex officio seat to the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

United States Agency for International Development

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) works to inform recipients and partners of U.S. humanitarian and development aid initiatives. USAID directly engages with local stakeholders as part of development and foreign assistance activities. USAID also designs and implements communications capacity building programs including infrastructure development and media training.

Intelligence Community

In its role as the head of the Intelligence Community (IC), the Office of the Director for National Intelligence (ODNI) is responsible for coordinating the efforts of intelligence agencies to conduct research and analysis on foreign public opinion, communication modes and mechanisms, and violent extremist communication as appropriate.

National Counterterrorism Center

The Global Engagement Group in the Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning at the National Counterterrorism Center coordinates, integrates, and synchronizes United States Government efforts to counter violent extremism and deny terrorists the next generation of recruits. The Global Engagement Group operates in accordance with Section 1021 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act and the direction provided by the National Implementation Plan. Utilizing these unique authorities, NCTC often serves as the interagency coordinator for counterterrorism-related deliberate communications and engagement planning efforts at the request of the SC IPC, NSS, and individual departments and agencies.

Other Departments and Agencies

Other departments and agencies with specific subject matter expertise and related communication and engagement capabilities may be asked to participate in communication and engagement strategy development and implementation as needed.

Measuring Success

It is important to the effectiveness of our programs that we develop the capacity to measure success and emphasize accountability. Measuring the results of a plan or activity requires the identification of indicators for the plan or activity's investment, products, and outcomes. These indicators are evidence of the activity's achievements and can be used to build assessments of costs and benefits over time. There are two types of indicators. Measures of Performance (MOP) show the amount of investment compared to the quantity of product produced by an activity. Meanwhile, Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) give some insight into whether a plan, program, or activity is achieving the desired impact.

In measuring success, the greater emphasis should always be on obtaining valid, accurate measures of effectiveness, since they help determine which efforts deserve continued funding; which efforts should be used as templates for future efforts; and which efforts should be adjusted or even abandoned. Programs that are meeting performance metrics but are not having the desired effect should be re-evaluated. In choosing the most appropriate indicators, departments and agencies should consider all relevant subject-matter expertise and should involve all relevant stakeholders. Program development should also include specific budgeting and resourcing for measurement activities that are needed to evaluate success.

There are difficult challenges to measuring the success of communication and engagement efforts. First, these efforts often target audiences' perceptions, which are not easily observed and, therefore, not easily measured. While there are some methods of measuring success, such as opinion polling, these methods are subject to many different types of uncertainty and margins of error and, therefore, cannot accurately predict behavior. Second, it is difficult to isolate the effect of communication and engagement from other influences including other policy decisions. Lastly, communication and engagement effects are long-term and require persistent measurement. Because of these challenges, it is best to develop phased, layered plans for measuring success that are specific to a given plan or program.

Assessment of the Need for an Independent, Not-for-Profit Organization

The National Security Staff currently sees no need to establish a new, independent, not-for-profit organization responsible for providing independent assessment and strategic guidance on strategic communication and public diplomacy, as recommended by the Task Force on Strategic Communication of the Defense Science Board. At this time, the existing enterprise either already meets or is working to meet the recommended purposes of the organization prescribed by the Task Force as follows:

- There are a variety of offices across the United States Government that provide an abundance of information and analysis on a regular basis to civilian and military decision-makers on global public opinion; the role of culture, values, and religion in shaping human behavior; media trends and influences on audiences; and information technologies. However, this information and analysis could be better coordinated and shared across the community. An additional entity would only produce more information and analysis to be coordinated and made accessible. The Strategic Communication IPC has formed a Sub-IPC on Information, Research, and Analysis to better coordinate and aggregate relevant information and analysis, and develop mechanisms for improving access across departments and agencies.
- As stated previously, an interagency process for communication and engagement planning was formalized and approved by the Strategic Communication IPC in November 2009. This process allows the interagency to develop strategies to address current and emergent areas of national security concern.

The ability to establish public-private partnerships is a critical issue. However, at this time, there are a number of key pending reviews, including the Presidential Study Directive on Development and the Department of State's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, that are examining the issue of public-private partnerships. As a result, we do not believe this report is the correct mechanism for addressing the United States Government's abilities to form public-private partnership.

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